

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

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

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

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

Interview: 1: Arrest, Torture, Forced Portering

Name: "Saw Ghay"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 36
 Ethnicity: Karen
 Occupation: Farmer
 Religion: Buddhist
 Marital Status: Married with four children aged 1 month to 8 years
 Address: Bilin Township, Karen State
 Date of Interview: January 1999
 Place of Interview: Near his village
 Source: KHRG

Q: Have SPDC troops ever come to your village?

A: Yes, they came not long ago. They came a couple of months ago, but I wasn't here because at that time I was sleeping out in the jungle.

Q: Do they ever make problems for the villagers?

A: Yes, they do. They also made problems for me when they arrested me. It was the military who arrested me. They came at the start of the paddy harvest [*October-November 1998*], in the month of Thadin Kyo. There were 6 Burmese soldiers. They have a camp at M—. They came and arrested us at night when we were sleeping. At that time we were sleeping in the forest, at our fields near the river. When they arrived at the steps of our farm hut, we woke up and saw the Burmese. Then they ordered us to come down to the ground. They interrogated me and punched me one or two times, and they touched my throat with a bayonet. I couldn't do anything, because we are villagers and they can do whatever they like to us. They arrested four of us. The others were M—, K— and P—. They are not married yet, they are all single. All of us are just villagers.

After they arrested me they took me to the village and interrogated me. They told me, "Your brain is hard [*you are stubborn, you won't speak*] so I must give you some water to drink". Then they grabbed me and forced me to lay down, and made me drink water. I couldn't drink it. They asked me, "Do you have a gun?" Then they held my nose closed and poured water into my mouth. [*A traditional torture – the victim cannot breathe and so continues gulping the water while also suffocating. This form of torture can be continued until the belly becomes distended and the stomach bursts, killing the victim.*] I couldn't bear it so I told them I would talk. I said I have no gun, I am a villager and have no gun. Then he closed my nose and did it again. He did it six or seven times, until I was about to die. Then he said my answers were strange. He tied me to the post of the monastery, and he told me I'd better think about it and that I'd have to drink more water. One of the commanders came to interrogate me and slapped my face. They punched me one time, and when they brought me back to the monastery they slapped me. After interrogating us, they took me to the hall, and they tied my hands to a post behind my back. I couldn't lay down and sleep, I had to stay like that all night until morning. In the morning, villagers brought rice for us. The others could eat, but not me because of the way I was tied. M— [*another villager*]

fed rice to me with a spoon. I had to eat like that.

Q: Did your friends also suffer?

A: They beat one of them three times – they hit him once on the head and the skin was broken. They punched P— one time and hit him with a rifle butt, then they interrogated him, covered his head and forced him to drink water.

Q: When did they release you?

A: They arrested us at night around midnight, and they released us the next morning in the village.

Q: Why did they treat you like that if you are villagers?

A: I don't know. They just want the villagers to suffer. They think that if they treat us like that then we won't be able to do anything against them.

Q: Have you ever had to do *loh ah pay* or portering for them?

A: Since they arrested me I haven't done any portering for them, but before that they called me two or three times when they were going back and forth and saw me along the way. If they see us when we are tending our buffaloes, they order us to go with them. We complain to them that the buffaloes will eat the paddy, but they won't listen to us. They told me to follow them for just a few minutes, but when the Burmese say "for a few minutes", it is a long time!

I never went as a porter for these troops [*the ones who arrested him*], but for other Burmese troops. When we stay in our village we eat whenever we want, two or three times a day. When we went portering and stayed with them, they fed us only twice. Sometimes they gave us enough rice and sometimes not enough. They never gave us hot rice, just cold rice. Sometimes they gave us fermented sesame oil, jackfruit curry or a bit of shrimp paste. In the jungle we had to sleep on the ground. They guarded us, and wouldn't allow us to go to piss or shit. Usually three or four soldiers went in front with a [*villager*] guide, and then the porters had to go between the soldiers. But sometimes the villagers guiding them have to go in front of the soldiers. [*The villagers are usually forced to march between the soldiers so they can't escape, but if the troops suspect possible landmines or ambush they often force the villagers and some villager porters to march in front.*]

They also force people to go for *loh ah pay* all the time. The villagers have to go and sleep there for three days, the same as porters. They have to take their own rice. I've never gone for *loh ah pay*, because you have to go by bullock cart. [*It's too far and he has no cart, so he probably pays to avoid going.*]

Interview: 2: Forced Labour, Beating, Extra-judicial Killing

Name: "Naw Lah Paw"
Sex: Female
Age: 21
Ethnicity: Karen
Occupation: Farmer

Marital Status: Single
Address: Haw Ko Ghaw village, Mone township, Karen State
Date of Interview: January 1999

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: I arrived here last night. I went to Ler Doh on Wednesday and slept there, then I rode the car and it took one day to come here directly. Five of us came together.

Q: Did you ever have to go for forced labour?

A: No, I always stayed at home. My younger brother always went. He is 19 years old. We hired people [*to go in their place*], but sometimes people didn't want to go even if we paid them so we had to steel our hearts, be brave and go to do sentry duty. My youngest brother had to do it. I had pity on him, but then I'd think, "What if I saw any trouble while on sentry duty?", and then I never dared go for him. He was afraid, but there was only him who could go for our family.

He also had to go to Thaug Bo [*Army camp*] to do forced labour clearing the weeds. As for me, I never even dared leave our house because I was so afraid. But then before I came here I was beaten by the Burmese special soldiers. It was one month ago. It was just before 6 a.m. on a Monday in December [*1998*], but I can't remember the date.

Q: Which group beat you?

A: Shan Bpu and his group [*Shan Bpu is a Sa Sa Sa group commander*]. I've never came face to face with the soldiers in my life, but this time my aunt and uncle asked me to carry rice so I went to help them. I'm the type who never dares go anywhere, even when my mother asks me to go. It's because I can't speak Burmese well. I know how to speak Burmese, but when I saw the soldiers I couldn't speak. I lost all the words I wanted to say. It was the first time I'd ever met the soldiers.

We hadn't done anything, we were just going to carry our paddy and they saw us, called us to them and then beat us. Most of us were Karen, but there were three children among us and they were Burmese. Some were 35, 40 or over 50 years old, and the children were about 10 years old. Eight of them called us over. First they just asked us, "Where do you live?", and we told them we live in Haw Ko Ghaw. They forced us to lie on our stomachs on the ground. They beat us with eight cane sticks until all but one of the sticks were broken. They beat us here, on our legs. Thirteen of us were beaten, and they beat each of us ten times. The children were only beaten three times each, but they beat the rest of us with all of their strength. While they were beating us their officer [*Shan Bpu*] ordered them, "If they move, shoot them dead at once". Two of them were beating us, and the rest were aiming their guns at us. After they had finished beating us we waited until they were far away and then we stood up. If we'd stood up in front of them they would have killed us, because they'd ordered us not to move.

Q: What were the soldiers' names?

A: One was Shan Bpu, but I don't know the others. They are special troops, and they are divided into many groups. They wear clothes like ours [*civilian clothing*], and sometimes

they wear guerrilla clothing [*camouflage uniforms rather than standard Burma Army fatigues*]. Most of the time they wear short or long camouflage pants.

Q: Are they the same troops who killed four villagers from Twa Ni Gone [*in November 1998 at the fish pond; see other interviews*]?

A: Yes, they are. That was about 2 months ago. I know because my younger brother had to go and bury them after the soldiers killed them. They called the 'patrol' people to bury them, and my brother was on 'patrol' [*'patrol' refers to rotating shifts of forced labour which villagers are forced to do at Army camps; 'patrol' labourers are used as messengers, porters and whatever other forced labour is required during their shift*].

Q: Why did they kill those four people?

A: I don't know because I didn't dare to ask or think about that. If I busy my brains about things like that then I will have to die someday. Please don't get me in trouble because I've told you about these things. I've never had people ask me questions like this so I'm afraid.

Q: What do those troops call themselves?

A: They call themselves 'Bo Shwit', because 'shwit' is the sound of thrusting a knife into someone to kill him. They are murderers.

Q: How many people have they killed?

A: *Huay!!* I can't say how many tens of people they've killed. Any place you go you'll hear about the people they've killed, they've killed people in almost every village. They haven't killed anyone in Haw Ko Ghaw yet, but they've killed people in Myeh Yeh, Hsi Mu Plaw, Si Pa Leh, and Meik Tha Lin, which is across the [*Sittaung*] river from our village. Their commander is Bo Maung Maung. I don't know their base, they just travel from village to village. They don't make camps, they just stay in people's houses. They walk the whole night without sleeping.

Q: Do the 'Bo Shwit' troops burn houses?

A: Before I came here they burned some houses and farm huts in Twa Ni Gone. They burned them without any reason. They said they were ordered to do it. The villagers there were forced to relocate to Yan Myo Aung a few years ago, but there were some old houses still left there. There were some villagers who had gone back there to work in the village, but they didn't dare say anything [*when their houses were burned*]. They can go back to the village to work, but they need a pass, and if the soldiers see you and call you, you must go to them and answer all their questions. If you don't go to them or if you run they kill you. Also, the villagers of Lu Ah had been forced to relocate before this group [*Sa Sa Sa*] came, but this group ordered them back to their village and they burned down the only school in the village. Now they've also burned down everything outside the village [*i.e. the farm huts and paddy storage barns*] in all the villages which are far from town. It's very difficult in our area.

Q: Do the KNLA ever arrive in your village?

A: No, we don't see them. If the KNLA went to our village now, things would get worse

and all the villages would disappear [*the SPDC will destroy them all to punish the villagers*].

Q: Since you were beaten do people still dare go to their fields?

A: Some people dare but some don't. People always have to get a pass from the headman before they can go anywhere. We had to get a pass. I don't think they would have allowed us to come to the refugee camp if they knew. I just told the village headman I was going to see my father in the hospital in xxxx.

Q: Have there always been Burmese soldiers around your village?

A: Yes, but the Burmese soldiers in the past were nice. The Burmese soldiers who come now, I don't know what kind of group they are. Everyone has to be afraid of them because they only kill people. If you know about Karen soldiers coming you had better not face them [*the Sa Sa Sa*] or you will die at once.

Q: Will you go back again?

A: I will find a job and work here. My mother will come next week, because she doesn't dare stay in our village either. No matter how hard we work in our village we can never get enough to live on. They demanded that we give 10 baskets of paddy from each acre. We didn't have enough to eat but we had to give it. We even had to buy rice to eat from other people.

Interview 3: Forced Labour, Extortion,

Name:	“Daw Khin Htwe”
Sex:	Female
Age:	30
Ethnicity:	Burman
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital Status:	Married with two children
Address:	Shwegyin township, Karen State
Date of Interview:	January 1999
Source:	KHRG

[*When interviewed “Daw Khin Htwe” had fled her village and had just arrived in Thailand as a refugee.*]

Q: What did you do in your village?

A: I found food in the forest. We cut and carried bamboo, made thatch and kept a plantation.

Q: Why did you come here?

A: We had to come here because of the current situation. I went to the forest, and whenever I came back they [*the SPDC military*] demanded money. If I made 100 *kyat* they demanded 50 *kyat*, and if I made 50 *kyat* they demanded 25 *kyat*. They were the

Burmese Army. They said it was for the price of a pass from their Army camp. We had to get a pass whenever we went anywhere. If we didn't they arrested and fined us, saying that we were disrespectful of them. Moreover, we also had to give porter fees and 'patrol' fees of 1,000 *kyat* every month [*'patrol' is the name given to rotating shifts of forced labour as general servants at the Army camp; if you pay you still have to go when called, but if you don't pay you have to go even more*]. In the past we only had to give 500 *kyat*, but starting three months ago we've had to give 1,000 *kyat* each month. If we couldn't give it, the soldiers from the Army camp captured us and tied us up in the camp, then afterwards they forced us to go out to find the money and bring it to them.

Q: Did they really arrest people if they couldn't pay?

A: Yes, but first they wait for one month, then if we still can't pay they arrest us, they send us to talk to the *Ma Wa Ta* [Township LORC, now called *Ma Ah Pa*, or Township Peace and Development Council] to frighten us, then send us out the next day to find money for them. Whenever they went anywhere they called us to go with them. They also called us to work to get them their food. They forced us to do many kinds of work for them. At last when we didn't have any food for ourselves anymore we talked to them about our problems, but they didn't care. They said, "If we let one of you behave like this [*be exempted from forced labour*] then everyone will become like you. So if there is one person in your house then half of that person should work for us, and if there are two people then one should work for us." At first we forgave them and remained there, but when they kept doing it for a long time [*constantly demanding forced labour and money*] we came here. I have siblings already here, so when I couldn't take it anymore I sold my pots and plates and came here.

Q: Is the Army camp close to your village?

A: Yes, you just have to climb up the hill and then go down. It takes about fifteen minutes. The regional Battalion is LIB 57, but now the mobile Battalion is rotating. The soldiers who are staying there now are LIB 440.

Q: Did you have to go for *loh ah pay* [*forced labour*]?

A: Yes, I had to go often. Now we have to go for three weeks every month, and if you don't go you must pay 700 *kyat* for each week. I couldn't do the work because I had to go to stay with my mother and also with my Aunt for a while. So I didn't go for the work for three weeks, and then they came and demanded that I pay 2,100 *kyat* for 3 weeks plus 2,000 *kyat* for porter fees. I told them that I had no money to pay, and they said they would send me to the Army camp. So I decided not to stay there any more and I came here.

Q: What kind of work do they force people to do for *loh ah pay*?

A: Fencing, cutting grass, and making thatch for their roofs, and the men have to dig pits [*for bunkers, etc.*]. I had to make thatch for them. They use the women for women's work and the men for men's work. They don't shout at the women, but we heard them shouting at the men right in front of us. From each section [*of the village*] they call for five, ten, or fifteen people at a time. They never give us rice to eat, we have to eat our own rice.

Q: Do children ever have to go and do *loh ah pay*?

A: In each family, if the children can go then they send the children [*so that the parents are free to work for the family's wellbeing*], but only the children who can work. In some families, old men who can still work go and do the work. You can't just stay or go as you like, you must go whenever they call you. [*Usually the troops demand one person per household, often with different sections of the village rotating between each other.*]

Q: What is the situation of the others in your village?

A: All the poor people are in trouble because we have to go wherever they call us to go and we have to do whatever they force us to do for them. Sometimes when they suspect someone, they arrest him and hit him.

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

A: I arrived here two days ago. We left our village 15 days ago but there was a problem on our way, so it took us a long time. We didn't know how to get here, so we had to ask people and come along with them step by step.

Interview: 4: Forced Relocation, Extra-judicial killing, Extortion

Name:	"Pu Hla Maung"
Sex:	Male
Age:	57
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Christian
Marital Status:	Married with 5 children aged 19-30
Address:	Haw Ko Ghaw village, Mone township, Karen State
Date of Interview:	January 1999
Source:	KHRG

[*When interviewed "Pu Hla Maung" had just arrived in Thailand as a refugee. His village is 7 miles from Kyauk Kyi (Ler Doh) town.*]

Q: Why have you come here and when did you arrive?

A: I arrived here two or three days ago. I came here because they found out about me. In the past I stayed in the mountains and worked for the resistance, but when I started getting old I knew I couldn't do that anymore so I went back to live with my children in the village. However, my name was on their list and now they [*SPDC - Sa Sa Sa*] are going to kill me so I have to find a place of refuge. After I fled my village, police and soldiers from LIB 351 went to my family and asked my wife about me once or twice. My wife told them I had gone to do work but she didn't know where. I went to my daughter's house on the other side of the [*Sittaung*] river and worked in the fields. They [*the Sa Sa Sa*] are only moving in the area east of the Sittaung river, they are not moving around in Pyu township [*west of the Sittaung*]. I was staying with my daughter in N—, and people came to tell me what had happened. I can't go back.

Q: Which way did you come here?

A: I went from T— to Rangoon and then from Rangoon to Pa'an, that bus fare was 450 *Kyat*. Then I came from Pa'an to Myawaddy and the bus fare was 1,200 *kyat*, and then I crossed the [*Moiei*] river. I've never been here before so I followed my friends here, there were four of us altogether. I couldn't stay in my village or my head would have been cut off. The day before I left to come here my friend from P— village, which is near my daughter's village of N—, received a message from a Burmese officer asking him to go and see him in his Battalion camp at 9 a.m. It was the camp of LIB 439 at Pyu town. He didn't dare go there so he came to me early in the morning, before dawn, and said, "Let's go now!" So we took our bags and left. He told me that the Burmese officer who had ordered him to go that day was going to make trouble for him. Four of us came here.

Q: What else is happening?

A: They have forced all the villages around Yan Myo Aung to move to Yan Myo Aung. It is about two hours' walk from Haw Ko Ghaw. The villages that were relocated are Twa Ni Gone, Yay Leh, Bpa Reh Si, Noh Hta Hta, Myeh Yeh and Si Bpaw Bpaw. Those people have to stay in Yan Myo Aung. They can return to their villages to work on their fields but they have to get a pass first. Some people went to town. If people don't want to relocate they kill them. About 20 years ago Yan Myo Aung was only a forest, and they made the people in the area clear the forest and all have to go and stay there together [*the first time they were relocated*]. Since then they've only been able to go back and live in their village sometimes [*according to other villagers, two to three years ago everyone was forced to move to Yan Myo Aung again*].

Q: Have you heard about people being killed?

A: They killed four villagers from Twa Ni Gone when the paddy was blooming, about November [*1998*]. They killed them by a pond. They were living in Yan Myo Aung but they went back to their old village to get food for their cattle, and they went to a pond. The village headman had written a pass for them but they killed them anyway. That first time they killed two people who were single and two who were married. Then the next time they killed five people - they were all Twa Ni Gone villagers as well. That was on December 26 or 27 [*1998*]. Three of those people were single and two were married. All the people they killed [*from Twa Ni Gone*] were Karen. The group that killed them were soldiers from Battalions 59, 60 and 351. They killed them for being friendly with the KNU. It's part of their 'dig out the roots' policy.

Q: Did they abuse your family or kill and eat your livestock when they entered the village?

A: No, they don't operate like that. They just quietly kill people one by one. As for me, I don't dare travel, I just hide myself and find my way. In December, I heard about an 18 year old female student from Lu Ah village who was still going to school, she had not yet finished 9th Standard [*grade 9*]. When he [*Shan Bpu from the Sa Sa Sa*] saw her, he demanded that she love him but she didn't. Her parents sent her to another place, so he threatened her parents and the village headman telling them that if the girl didn't come back he would kill both her parents and the village headman. The girl was so worried that she had to marry him. Her father's name is U T— and the one who forced her to marry him was Shan Bpu from IB 53 [*sic: 59*]. This is the only case of this nature that I have heard of.

Q: What is the name of the group that is operating like this?

A: They are called the *Sa Sa Sa*. They have a lot of authority.

His son: *Sa Sa Sa* means no interrogation, no analysis and no questions. [In other words, they just kill without interrogation; several villagers believe this is what it stands for, though it actually stands for “Bureau of Special Investigations”.]

Q: How many people came with you?

A: I came with my son W—. He is about 30 years old and is married with five children. He sent his family to my daughter’s house on the other side of the Sittaung river, to N—village, which is in a better situation than my village.

Q: When you were in your village did you have to pay taxes to the SPDC?

A: Each family had to give over 1,000 *kyat* to the SPDC each month. Sometimes they had to give 1,400 *kyat* and sometimes 1,900 *kyat*. Sometimes we had to give over two or three thousand each month. Every house had to pay them. If you couldn’t give it, the police would come and arrest you and put you in prison. Then you have to buy your release for not less than 10,000 *kyat*. That has happened to many people in my village, but not to my family. Those who don’t have the money to pay flee with their families to stay in other places.

Q: Do farmers have to give taxes for their fields?

A: Yes, seven baskets [of unhusked rice] for each acre. If they don’t give, the soldiers come and arrest them.

Interview: 5: Forced Labor, Extortion, Forced Relocation, Rice Quota, Livelihood

Name:	Omitted
Age:	23
Sex:	Male
Ethnicity:	Omitted
Address:	xxxx village, Latputta Township, Irrawaddy Division
Date of Interview:	February 1999
Source:	FTUB (Hsaw Wah Deh Group)

My village is in Latputta township, in Irrawaddy division. The reason I left my village is there is no hope for our family to live. In December 1998, the SLORC officials ordered that about thirty villages in Latputta township should be relocated because, according to the Forestry Department’s map, those villages were located in the preserved forest area. The villages have been there for years, since before the independence of Burma. Each village has about 200 families and there are many rice fields and coconut trees there. Thus, villagers were very upset about the relocation and tried to negotiate with the authorities. There is no proper law to defend us and the authorities can do anything they want. Even criminals who offered money to the court were released.

The villages have not moved yet because the harvest is not finished. In our region, this year’s crop is low because of drought. However, the quota rice demanded by the

SLORC is the highest compared to the previous years: Twelve baskets of unhusked rice per acre for every acre. (one basket is 46 pounds). The quota rice rate is about 350 *kyat* a basket. In the previous years, soil were graded and with that classification, the quota rice demanded ranged from five baskets to twelve baskets per acre. Moreover, there is another rice demand from the army, which is called "Goodwill Rice". It is officially two tins of rice. (one tin is about 2.4 kgs). However, the army demands two extra tins to cover transportation and shrinkage. The actual quota, therefore, is four tins.

There were threats that persons who fail to fulfill the quota rice would be imprisoned and his or her rice field confiscated and handed over to companies that were encouraged by the SLORC to grow rice.

The army is also recruiting new soldiers. The soldiers demand three to four villagers over 14 years of age every year. Therefore, villages have to collect money (about 500 *Kyat* a family) and give it to the soldiers for failing to recruit new soldiers for the army. There are demands for Kahtein and other religious ceremonies of the army. Villagers have to donate money but we do not hear any ceremonies being held by the soldiers of the camp.

In summer, the army camp, usually soldiers from LIB 271, ordered villagers to cut down coconut trees for repairing bunkers. We have to contribute our workforce for that purpose. Our village sends about fifteen persons a day by rotation to the camp for building bunkers, barracks and fences. We receive nothing. We have to bring tools and food of our own. Even soldiers do not allow sufficient time to have lunch. When the whistle blows to continue work, we have to stop eating and leave the rest of the food. If the soldiers do not like the work, they order villagers to work at night or continue work the next day. Villagers who fail to work are charged 60 to 90 *Kyat* a day depending on the type of work.

The villagers are getting poorer and poorer. However, the UNDP has started assisting our poor villagers by its development programs. The UNDP Burmese staff members are rich. They use high quality equipment and materials, such as good boats and bags. They come to villages for giving injections to children and granting loans to the villagers. Medicine is free but villagers have to pay money to the team for meals, while they are staying in our village. A six men team which came for injections and spent a day in a village, requested 10,000 *Kyat* for their meals. Big villages like Ein Ma Gyi had to pay 30,000 *Kyat* to the UNDP team for food. Sometimes, there was a Westerner with the group and then, the group did not ask money for food.

The loan program is for poor villagers in our area. The UNDP lent money for a pig farm, for buying new fishing nets, for growing eucalyptus trees and for growing betel leaves. There is 3 percent interest rate per month. The loan is for one year term. However, the staff explained that if a borrower is only able to pay interest by the year end, they would consider extending the period. I think the program is not so good for the rural people.

Moreover, the buying rate for a pig is also about 35 per cent higher than the actual rate. There are primary schools and clinics jointly built by the UNDP and villagers. Villagers have to pay half of the price of buildings being built. After that, wealthy families of villages have to pay 100 *kyat* a month for teachers and nurses whose salaries are around 1,000 *kyat*.

In our region the SLORC is encouraging villagers to grow eucalyptus trees. We are informed by the Forestry Department that Japan will buy oil extracted from the trees and will give a lot of money. Therefore, many villages have around a thousand of those trees grown by

villagers. Also the Forestry Department is growing a lot. Shwe Kyun Thar camp, a place formally a village of Eukyun village which was relocated has around five thousands of those trees. The Department forced some villages to relocate and cut down coconut trees and then grow eucalyptus trees. They said they would make the region green by substituting with eucalyptus trees. (There is no knowledge distribution that growing eucalyptus trees would affect the land.)

My parents advised me to give up being a farmer and find a job in town. Therefore, I went to Bogalay but it was difficult to get a job. I met a security guard of the hospital there and he suggested not to work because his salary was around 700 *kyat* and it was not sufficient. Then, he requested permission to resign, but the authorities told him he would be allowed to resign if he give 7,000 *kyat* as compensation. He has no money so he has to continue working there. This rule is about the same in every department. Therefore, I left for Thailand to work.

Interview: 6: Extortion, Forced Labor

Name: "Pu Lianthlang"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 36
 Ethnicity: Chin
 Marital Status: Married, with 2 children
 Address: xxxx village, Thantlang Township, Chin State
 Date of Interview: February 1999
 Source: CHRO

["Pu Lianthang" is a respected person in the village. Although he does not want to serve as the village chairman under the SPDC, upon requests by the villagers, he is serving as chairman of xxxx Village Peace and Development Council in Thantlang township.]

Q: How is your relationship with the SPDC army? Could you tell us about it?

A: SPDC's army and government give us the orders. And I, the chairman, and the villagers have to follow accordingly.

Q: Could you tell us what kind of orders are given?

A: The most amoral man we ever met is Major Myint Aung from IB 372. One of his orders was that fifteen villagers had to do sentry duty every day. Counting the number of the villagers, each person has to do sentry duty three days per week and so have no time to do our own work.

Q: Could you not explain these problems or make requests to the Major?

A: To make a request to military personnel, I need at least *Kyat* 20,000 and a pig. We have nothing right now. If I go without money, I will be accused of acting against the army and be beaten. Therefore, at this time, I cannot make any request.

Q: Why do you think they give these kind of orders?

A: He knows that we can not carry out his order. He purposely gives us orders which we cannot carry out. Then, he expects us to bring him money, pigs, and /or liquor for his reconsideration. I think that's why he gives us these kind of orders.

Q: Any other kind of orders?

A: There are a lot more. They order us to bring them four big chicken, two viss of fish or pork, two thighs of deer or wild pig (or any wild animal) and fresh vegetable to the army camp (Lungler village) every week, not later than the time they fixed.

Q: What do you think why they order like this?

A: I think, because the government does not provide them sufficiently. That's why we are being forced to suffer.

Q: What will happen if you do not give them?

A: Do not mention the word 'not giving'. If we bring them the orders an hour later than the time they fixed, we would be imposed a fine. Sometimes they even fine us, complaining the food we bring them is not fresh.

Q: How much do you pay for a fine and to whom do you pay it? And what do they use it for?

A: It depends on how big the village and financial standing of the villages. They know the financial standing of the villages around this area. They frequently impose a fine the villages with a good financial standing. They put a fine on the poor villages when they do not have money to buy alcohol. Usually they impose a fine from *kyat* 1,000 up to 5,000. We have to pay it to Major Myint Aung. In his absence, we pay it to the Commander-In-Charge of the camp. When they get the money, they send two or tree villagers to Thantlang which is three days walk away from our village to buy alcohol. They never pay the villagers for this service, and the villagers have to pay their own travel expenses.

Q: Did you write a complaint to the higher authorities?

A: Major Myint Aung told us that he has received instruction from the higher authorities to get anything the army wants from the remote villages where there is difficulty of transportation. That's why I don't want to make any complaint. I think that they are real beggars, they have no shame about begging from others.

Q: Do you have anything more to say?

A: On July 15, 1998, the Department of Land Taxation issued an order prohibiting us from doing our traditional cultivation. The order stated that every household has to complete 3 acres of terrace cultivation and give a *kyat* 1,500 deposit to the Land Taxation Department. Whoever fails to pay a deposit will faced severe action.

Q: Is there anyone who has knowledge of how to do terrace cultivation and how did you start it?

A: No one knew how to do it. According to the order each household had to complete three

acres but we had no money for a deposit. For that reason, on April 24, 1998, I went to Thantlagn Township Land Taxation Office and made a request to U Hoi Ling that we did not have sufficient funds. This request meant paying them 30,000 *kyat* which I collected from the villagers. Afterwards, we were allowed to continue with our traditional cultivation practices.

Q: Could you please share with us your feelings and thoughts?

A: I think the soldiers have been begging in an unfair manner from the people because the government cannot provide them with sufficient resources. The more they beg, the more excess materials they can get, and therefore, the more the honor of the government will be tarnished. I think the authorities are trying to build up their own power and maintain stability through these soldiers. I believe, if every citizen selflessly acts against a group of authorities, this government will definitely be demolished. However we can not give up our 'self' easily because we must struggle for our daily lives. That is why people are continually being made to suffer.

Interview: 7: Forced Labor, Forced Porters, Landmines, Child Labor, Looting

Name :	“Zing Par”
Sex:	Female
Age:	41
Ethnicity:	Chin
Religion:	Christian
Occupation:	Slash-and-burn farmer
Address:	Khan Tlang village, Paletwa Township, Chin State
Marital status:	Married with three children (2 daughters and one son)
Date of Interview:	February 5, 1999
Place of Interview:	Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh
Source:	Images Asia

(Note: Her husband is sick and cannot work, she supports the family alone)

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: We fled our village because we had to suffer too much. We were tortured by the Burmese Army! They forced us to work for them all the time. Even, we, the women and the girls, were forced to work in their camp, while they took our husbands and all the men as porters during their patrol. When our husbands went as porters, they didn't receive any food. There is an army camp in Khan Tlang. We don't know which battalion, but their headquarters are in Paletwa. We, the women and children, were called to cut grass in their camp for the whole day, everyday. They didn't give us any food, nor any wages for our labour. We didn't get anything from the army. Moreover, they collected rice and money from us. The Burmese soldiers are living off the people. We could no longer endure this unbearable situation, so we decided to leave Khan Tlang and flee to the border. We stayed in a village there for a while in 1997 [on the Burma side of the border]. One night in February 1998, we were informed

that the army had surrounded our place. All the villagers decided to run away secretly. We couldn't carry anything. We fled with only the clothes that we were wearing and with our children. It was night time. The army was chasing us and fired at us. The next morning we crossed the border just before the soldiers caught up with us. Here is my husband. He is a sick man. He is suffering from malnutrition because the army always called him as a porter and they never gave him any food [he is very thin and cannot walk properly]. He was suffering so much. That is why he became like this. Because of the army!

Q: Did all the villagers from Khan Tlang flee?

A: There were about 150 families. Most of them fled. Only one family is left there because they have connection with the Army. Some fled to Bangladesh, but most went to Mizoram. Because in Mizoram, the people are Mizos [same ethnic group]. It is easier for us to get work and survive there.

Q: How often did your husband have to be a porter?

A: Two or three times a week! We couldn't work for ourselves. Every time, he had to carry for one day, or two days each time. Sometimes they even called him at night.

Q: How many days could he work in a month?

The Husband : In a month, I could only stay about 5 days at home. Even in the rainy season, when there was flood, we could not sleep, and we were forced to cross rivers.

Q: What did you have to do at the army camp?

A: They ordered me to carry sand from the river bank to the road. Inside their camp, but also outside in the village. They were building a road. The men had to carry for them as porters and, at the same time, the women had to work in the army camp. Only the elderly people and the small children could stay at home. Fathers and mothers, as well as the elder brothers and sisters had to work. My youngest daughter here is now 12 years old. She had to carry water at the army camp too.

Q: How did the soldiers call the workers?

A: The soldiers came by themselves in our village, and grabbed anyone at random. Everyday like that!

Q: Did they ever beat anyone?

A: Of course! When we were working, they beat us. They kicked us with their boots. They forced me to carry sand from the river and I was too slow. They beat me to force me to work faster.

Another Villager : Even though we were working for them, they forced us to work very fast. When I was carrying, my head load was very heavy and I couldn't walk fast. Then they kicked me with their boots and hit me with a bamboo stick. They hit my legs and my back quite badly. I also had to repair their barracks, fetch water from the river and build fences around their camp.

Q: When did that happen?

A: Since CNF started their activities. Since that time, we are suffering a lot.

Another Villager : When we are going to our fields with a bag of rice, they accuse us that we are carrying it to CNF, and they beat us. In the past we had to do a little bit of labour for them, not much, but after CNF started operating, it became continuous and serious. More and more...

Zing Par: They (the Burmese soldiers) come to check our rice. If we have three kg of rice, they take two kg for themselves. Moreover, every month, they collect 500 *kyat* from each family. They also take from us whatever animals we had, our chickens, our pigs. They never pay for anything they take. Whenever they see that the animal is fat enough to eat, they demand it from us. When we go and ask for compensation, they beat us and answered to us: "This is what you have to do! You must give us!"

Other Villager : They (the Burmese soldiers) even said: "This is not your country. This is our country! If you don't want to give us, then go away from this country!"

Zing Par : Anything they see in our house they steal. They even take our own properties, our clothes. They stole my back-strap loom and my money. They robbed 1,000 *Kyat* from me. In front of me! They came into my house and pointed a gun at me, and then they robbed me.

Q : What do you think about CNF?

A: They never entered our village. Whether they are good or bad, we don't know. CNF collected funds in our village through the———. We had to pay anyway. But we feel much worse that we had to support the Burmese Army. The Burmese Army extorted a lot of money from us, and they also tortured people. They always inquired about the taxes for CNF but we never told them. Those who are suffering the most are the traders who are going to Bangladesh from time to time. They grabbed them, beat them and accused them: "Of course, you are helping CNF and you are carrying their letters!"

Q: What about landmines?

A: There were many landmines around our villages. I never heard of any people stepping on them, but so many animals blew up, especially at night. We had to be careful for landmines since 1988. The Burmese army usually warned us not to walk here and there, especially along the small footpaths, not the main paths that the army and the civilians are using for traveling [small footpaths are used by opposition armies].

Q: What was the situation in the border village where you stayed in 1997?

A: The situation was not good there either. Several [opposition] armies were active around there, and they all demanded money from us. But the Burmese Army was especially bad. One day, the troops stayed overnight in the village and ordered the people to organise a cultural night. For that, they called all the villagers to gather at one place. One woman did not participate the programme. The commander of their group, a Lieutenant, saw a light in her house. He got angry and just fired at the house. She got killed.

Q: What do you hope for the future?

A: For the future, I hope that we can stay here, and that we could improve our life like other

people. There is a high school here [two hours walk away], a market to sell some of our production and some communication with the outside world. My children can now go to school. My daughter is now in second Standard and my son in first Standard.

Interview: 8: Arrest, Beating, Extortion

Name: "Saw Plaw"
Sex: Male
Age: 23
Ethnicity: Karen
Occupation: Farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Marital Status: Married with four children
Address: Bilin Township, Karen State
Date of Interview: February 1999
Place of Interview: Near his village

Q: Do SPDC soldiers ever come to your village?

A: They come to the village very often. They came and arrested and beat me, just four days ago. They came in the daytime, at 3 p.m. I didn't know they were coming. When they arrived, two responsible [*KNU*] people were in my house, the group leader and the militia leader. When they jumped down out of the house, the Burmese shot at them. Then they accused me of helping those people. When I came down the house, they beat and punched me. I don't know how many times they hit me, over ten times, and they hit me three times with a gun. Then they took me to the monastery. When we arrived at the monastery, they poked me with a bayonet, they beat me in the face with a bayonet and they put the bayonet in my mouth and shook it around. Then they tied my hands behind my back and I had to sleep like a dog or a pig.

Q: When did they release you?

A: They released me after two days. I had to give three baskets of rice and one pig. It wasn't my own rice. The villagers gave it for me, then I had to buy rice to give back to them. It cost me 3,000 *kyat* for one basket of rice, 9,000 *kyat* altogether.

Q: How big was the pig?

A: 16 *viss* [25 kg / 55 lb]. It was worth 8,000 *kyat*. They forced us to give it. They ordered me to give them a gun, and I said I had no gun, I only had one pig. I couldn't find a gun for them because I'm not a soldier, I'm a villager.

Q: Did they arrest other people together with you?

A: They arrested three of us, but they only tortured me. They only hit my friend one time. His name is P—, he is 35 and married with 4 children.

Q: Why did they arrest him?

A: He was together with me in the house, so after those two [*KNU*] people left the house

they arrested and tortured us. They also took things from my house. They took 2 big tins of sesame oil and all of our clothing, knives, spoons and our axe.

Q: Where did the soldiers go back to after beating you?

A: They went back to M—. Their uniforms said LIB xxx on them. I don't know any of them.

Q: Now how do you make your living?

A: Now I can't do anything. I am feeding my family like this. We stay together with our parents and eat together.

Interview: 9: Extortion, Forced Portering

Name: "Saw Joseph"
Sex: Male
Age: 27
Ethnicity: Karen
Occupation: Farmer
Religion: Christian
Address: Pa Doh Plaw village, Kyauk T'Ga township, Karen State
Date of Interview: February 1999
Source: KHRG

[“Saw Joseph” was interviewed after fleeing his village and arriving in Thailand as a refugee.]

Q: Why did you come here?

A: I arrived here seven days ago, on February 12, 1999. I came because they *[SPDC soldiers]* are collecting too many fees for portering and sentry duty. We had to pay the porter and sentry duty fees one to three times per month. We have been paying the fees for a long time, since about ten years ago. They demand 1,000 or 1,500 *kyat* each time *[per family]*. Sometimes they collect money for 'urgent' situations; they order the village headman to collect that for them.

Q: What did they do to the villagers if they can't give the fees?

A: If we have no money we borrow money from a money-lender, for which we have to pay 15 or 20 *kyat* per month for every 100 *kyat* *[15-20% interest per month]*, or we give paddy which they value at 400 *kyat* per basket. The most we can get for one basket is 500 *kyat*. It's not easy if you borrow money or give paddy. If the villagers can't pay, they force the villagers to go *[labour for them]*.

Q: Do you have to pay every month?

A: Yes. They ask the leader of each group of ten houses to collect the money from each house. If we can't give the money, they take our belongings. Only Indians *[villagers of Indian descent]* and Chinese are still coming and staying in the village *[no one else can*

afford to].

Another Woman: Karen villagers are leaving the village and only Indian and Chinese [*villagers*] are staying in the village.

Q: Did you have to go for *loh ah pay* this year?

A: This year when they arrested porters, we always fled. As for *loh ah pay* [*other forced labour*], we had to go when the Sittaung river overflowed but that was a long time ago. We had to rebuild the broken embankment. They forced about 150 villagers to go and work for ten or twenty days. You can walk to the Sittaung river in one day, but by the time you arrive it's dark. They told us to bring our own food and didn't give us anything.

Q: Do you think you will go back?

A: No.

Interview: 10: Relocation, Extra-judicial Killing, Forced Portering, Extortion, Health and Education, Forced Marriage

Name:	“Saw Tee Ko”
Sex:	Male
Age:	40
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Marital Status:	Married with five children
Address:	Myeh Yeh village, Mone township, Karen State
Date of Interview:	February 1999
Source:	KHRG

[“Saw Tee Ko” was the headman of his village, which was forced to relocate in 1991. He was interviewed shortly after fleeing the relocation site and arriving in Thailand as a refugee.]

Q: Who said they were going to kill you?

A: The operations commander of Battalion 60. I can't recall his name. I didn't dare ask his name because I thought if I asked him he would do something to me. He captured me in my house and accused me of being in contact with *Tha Bone* [*'rebels'*]. They accused me of feeding the forest people, of letting them sleep in my house and sending food to them.

Q: What is the name of the relocation site where you were?

A: It is called Yan Myo Aung and I moved there in 1991 because the Burmese forced us to. The relocation site was five miles from Ler Doh and four miles from Na Than Gwin. They forced us to move during the rainy season and we had to leave our houses. They burned down our houses and cut down our mango and coconut trees, because they said we were attached to those things so we wouldn't want to leave our village otherwise. They cut them all down and forced us to relocate to Yan Myo Aung because Yeh Aung and his [*KNLA*] troops shot at them and killed fourteen of their soldiers. The soldiers they fired at were a

mixed column from the SPDC IB 351 and 60. That happened in April of 1991. A KNLA soldier came and saw that there were only a few Burmese soldiers, so they [*the KNLA soldiers*] were waiting on the path that the Burmese would return on. I knew that the KNLA were waiting for them so I told them not to go back, because if they did they would be shot. But they never listened to me, so they went back and they were shot. They got angry with us because of that and forced us to relocate. Before they forced us to relocate they tied us up under a banyan tree. Villagers from three villages were punished: they tied up 25 people from Ter Bpaw, 25 people from Po Thaung Su and 25 people from Myeh Yeh. It was only the young men who were tied up, but the old men, women and children were put out in the sun. They put the old people, women and children in the sun for two or three days. They told us they must not hear the sound of gunfire, and that if they heard it they would kill us all. We told them they wouldn't hear the sound of guns and that we would take responsibility for that. If we tell the Karen soldiers not to shoot, they don't shoot. They told us that we must tell them the truth or they were going to kill us. Then we told them, "Before the KNLA shot at you we saw them and we informed the Burmese soldiers but they didn't care and left our village." They continued to hold us but didn't harm us. They didn't untie us until they forced us to relocate. Then they forced us to destroy our own houses and when we moved we had to take along our own rice and water.

They forced us to live on the road at first, then they forced us to relocate to Done Doh and stay there. Three villages had to relocate: our village, Po Thaung Su and Ter Bpaw. We thought that they would let us live in Done Doh, but when everyone from all three villages arrived they forced us to move to Yan Myo Aung. That was during the rainy season. We had to travel in the rain and build our houses in the rain. While we were building our houses they wanted us to suffer, so they shelled us with heavy weapons and one cow was killed.

Q: Did any other villages have to relocate?

A: The people of other villages who had helped us to transport our things while we were relocating thought they weren't going to have to relocate. Those who helped us were from Twa Ni Gone, Bpa Reh Si, Noh Htaw Hta and Ta Maw Ma villages. However, after they finished helping us they themselves were forced to dismantle their houses and relocate to where we were. That was during the rainy season and the rain was falling heavily. By then the rain had destroyed the road so they weren't able to transport all of their things. Things which they left behind were stolen by the Burmese people from Haw Ko Ghaw. They stole only the nice wood and nice possessions, and then the Burmese soldiers burned the rest of the houses in the villages.

There were 370 households in the relocation site after we were first forced to move there in April of 1991. When we first arrived we had to clear the bushes and trees to stay there, because they forced us to move to a jungle area where a nearby village let its buffaloes forage for food. It was rainy season and water was everywhere. The water came up to our waists in some places. It was very hard to live. We couldn't do anything. We had to stay in our houses because of the water. If we went to find vegetables we had to walk in water that was sometimes chest deep. They didn't arrange anything for us. The next dry season they came and drilled a well eighty feet deep. When we pumped up the water it looked clear and good but when we cooked rice with it the rice turned black so we couldn't

eat it and threw it away. [*The water was clear after being pumped out but if let sit for a moment it would turn yellow and a layer of oil formed on the surface.*] After that, we had to filter the water through sand and stone in two or three stages before we could cook the rice and the rice would remain white.

Q: Where did you get rice?

A: We had to borrow rice from our friends. Some people were able to bring a lot of rice while others weren't able to bring any. We had to share with each other. We couldn't go to our old villages and those who did were heavily punished. Hunger became common. It was very hard for us until the harvest of the following year. We tried hard throughout the year. People weren't allowed to go back to work in their villages, so some people hired themselves out to farmers in the area around our relocation site. We had to sell our bullock-carts and our cattle and then we worked for other people. Sometimes we were paid 200 *kyat* per day and other times it was only 150 *kyat* per day. As for me, I carried people on my trishaw every day.

Q: Did any Burmese villages have to relocate?

A: The Burmese people in Burmese villages were not forced to relocate, but they were afraid when we weren't there so they relocated to where we were. The Burmese village is just the Burmese section of Myeh Yeh [*his village*]. They lived with us for two years and then finally returned to their old villages.

Q: Could you open a school for the children?

A: Yes, we opened a school there that went from Kindergarten to 4th Standard [*Grade 4*]. The teacher was from Myeh Yeh, her name was Thramu C—. Another teacher was the wife of Thra T—. Because of our poverty we couldn't support the teachers, but they understood our situation and encouraged our children to learn without receiving anything themselves. The children were allowed to worship and sing but they weren't allowed to learn Karen [*language*].

Q: Did you have medicine if your children became ill?

A: There was no medicine and we weren't allowed to carry medicine. When our children were ill, we went to buy medicine for them and had to hide the medicine on the way back. If they [*the Burmese soldiers*] saw us with medicine, they would kill us. After the soldiers told us that, no one carried medicine anymore so no one was killed for that reason. When my children were ill I had to give them traditional medicine and if that didn't work I had to take them to the hospital. We couldn't carry medicine but we were allowed to take sick people to the hospital.

Q: After you were relocated, how many villagers eventually returned to their old villages?

A: After we were relocated almost every family from every village eventually returned to their villages. Those who didn't dare didn't return. As for us, we returned to the area of our old village and lived there for one year. We didn't dare live in the village but instead lived between the Burmese section and Leh Bpah. We lived there a year, then Bo Htun Htun from IB 73 told us to go live back in our old village in Myeh Yeh, so we moved. He told us

to live quietly so we did. He stayed there with us for 3 months and then left and went back. After he left, [Battalion] 440 came and stayed with us for a month and then forced us to go back to the relocation site at Yan Myo Aung. Their Battalion commander's name was Major Khin Maung Shwe. They forced us to move during the rainy season while it was raining heavily, and the children got bitten a lot by mosquitoes. We couldn't carry everything with us, so we had to rebuild our houses with what we had brought. While we were building our houses we had to live in the rain, and when we were finished the houses were very small and the thatch for the roof was old and falling apart. That was in 1994.

Q: How many villages had to move back to the relocation site?

A: Myeh Yeh, Bpa Reh Si and Noh Htaw Hta had to move back. Yay Leh, Ter Bpaw, Po Thuang Su and other villages bribed the soldiers with money so they could stay in their old villages. Each village had to pay hundreds of thousands of *kyat* to bribe the soldiers. I heard that Ter Bpaw and Po Thuang Su had to pay 300,000 *kyat* each. Yay Leh village is large, so they had to give 500,000 *kyat*. As for our village, we couldn't bribe them so we had to relocate again. At first they didn't demand that we go, but they said, "If you can't give us this amount of money, go!" We couldn't give them the money so we had to go.

Q: Did they kill anyone while you were in Yan Myo Aung?

A: They killed a villager from Yay Leh named Say Sai, a villager from Twa Ni Gone named Maw Kaw Gwee, a villager from Thay Ghee Lu named Maw Peh Yah, a villager from Thu Boh Lu named Lah Khaw Wah Pa, a Bpa Reh Si villager named U Gah Lu and a Ta Maw Ma villager whose name I can't recall. They killed them because they said they had been feeding, hiding and helping the people in the bushes [*KNLA soldiers*] who the Burmese said had shot at them at Na Than Gwin. They said that the bush people were able to shoot at them at Na Than Gwin because of those villagers so they arrested and killed them. Those people hadn't done what they said. They told them that they hadn't fed, hid or helped the bush people but the Burmese wouldn't believe them so they killed them.

Q: Did they ever capture you to porter while you were living there?

A: They captured us like this: first they ordered every man to come to a meeting where they said they would tell us important things. When all the men arrived, they forced us to get in their truck and then took us to the other side of the road. They told us, "Anyone who dares not go must pay us a bribe." The people had to pay 5,000, 6,000, 7,000, 14,000, 15,000 and 20,000 *kyat* and then they released them [*the price went up as more were released*]. They did that twice. They also captured everyone they saw working in the fields. They chased them so the men couldn't escape. People had to leave their working tools behind and follow the soldiers. They captured two people, U Mya and his son, from our village. U Mya's son had to go to Mu Theh and Pwa Ghaw [*as a porter*] for almost 2 months. He tried to escape twice because he was ill, but the Burmese soldiers captured him and beat him badly. They beat him, kicked him and punched him until he was almost dead. He was very ill and couldn't walk any more so he was left in Mu Theh. He called his parents to go and get him from Mu Theh and take him home. They went and he had to be carried home. When he got home he was almost dead and his mother was crying, but she was able to cure him. The medicine was much too expensive for them, but he got better in the end. They

captured porters like this in '96 and '97.

Q: Why couldn't you live there any longer, why did you flee?

A: We can't stay there anymore because they have accused some of us of being members of the KNU organisation and of providing security for its army. They find people, accuse them and then kill them. They find people who had contact with the KNU in '95 and those who have contact now. If they can find people who have had [any] contact with the KNU at any time in their past, they kill them. Shan Bpu [*leader of one of the 'Guerrilla Retaliation' groups*] has killed people in Lu Ah, Haw Ko Ghaw, Twa Ni Gone, Myeh Yeh, and Yan Myo Aung too. When we found out that they are going to kill all the villagers who had helped the KNU, we knew they would kill us too. Our names are in their books. When they read out the names, people told us so and we ran. Now they are still persecuting all the people. They are the *Sa Thon Lon* [*Three S's, i.e. Sa Sa Sa*]. People said that they don't ask any questions [*they kill without interrogation*] and they are going to "cut off the tops of all the plants". The second group, Sweeper, will come to sweep up the people and then the third group will come to scorch the earth and "dig out the roots". They will kill all the relatives of the forest people [*the KNLA*]. The *Sa Thon Lon* don't look like they will go and fight [*go into battle*], they are just going around killing members of the general public. They said that they are going to clear the people out of the countryside, that they have to kill all people who support the forest people and people who give taxes to the forest people. They also said that if the KNLA shoots and kills one of them, they will burn down the village closest to where it happened and kill everyone in the village. They killed 4 people from Twa Ni Gone but I only know the name of Saw Gka Bweh. In Lu Ah I only know the name of Saw Heh Bo among the people they have killed. They've killed many people but I don't know all their names. In Mone township, where we were living, they have killed no less than 10 people but I only know some of their names. Therefore we didn't dare stay any longer and we came here. We had to suffer many problems while we were fleeing to get here.

Q: Why did they kill the four people from Twa Ni Gone?

A: They told people that those four ran away when they called to them so they killed them. However, what they said is not true. Those people didn't run when they called them. When they called those people away from their fishing at the pond, they took them to a garden and said to them, "*Tha Bone* [*'rebels'*] come and sleep in your village and you cook fish for them to eat." The villagers answered that the KNLA hadn't come and they'd never cooked for them, but they kept on accusing them and finally killed them. As for the boy, they shot him 4 times with their gun but that didn't finish him so they stabbed him to death and then cut off his head. Before they killed him the boy said, "I haven't done anything bad to you but if you are going to kill me, I'm at peace because I have no guilt." Still they killed him. They thought that the boy may have had some special stone in his belly because their guns hadn't killed him, so they cut open his belly and his intestines but saw nothing. Then they cut open his whole body and still found nothing. Another of the four said to them, "You've accused me and are going to kill me, so kill me and I will wait for you in heaven!" Then they killed him. [*After killing them*] they took all their fish and rice and also took all the money which the villagers had in their huts that they had got from selling fish.

Q: How did they kill Saw Heh Bo?

A: They were staying and eating in Saw Heh Bo's house. They told him that he'd had contact with the forest people, acting as security for the forest people and giving them money. He told them he had done that in the past but he hadn't done that for a long time. But they told him, "We aren't just killing people who have done these sorts of things recently, we are also killing people who have done things in the past. We have to kill all of them!"

Q: What about the situation in Baw Bpee Der and Ma La Daw?

A: When they went to Baw Bpee Der and Ma La Daw areas they killed people there too but I don't know their names. They killed people in Aung Chan Tha, Goh Nee, Tee Hta Lu, Baw Bpee Der, T'Kaw Pwa and Way Sweh. They killed four people in T'Kaw Pwa but I don't know their names. In T'Kaw Pwa, when they saw people going to their farms to pound their paddy they interrogated and beat them even though they had a pass. Those who didn't have a pass were captured, killed and their paddy was burned. The Burmese burned a lot of paddy in Way Sweh and T'Kaw Pwa areas.

They killed Saw Aye and Po Theh Pyay while they were fishing in their boat [*in November 1998; Saw Aye was from Myeh Yeh and Po Theh Pyay from Ter Bpaw*]. When they saw them, they demanded that they come to them. When Saw Aye and Po Theh Pyay got to them, they ordered them to raise their hands and then they shot them dead. After killing them, they cut off their heads and took them to Ter Bpaw and Po Thauung Su. They hung one of the heads on the path to Mone and the other on the path to Ler Doh [*Kyauk Kyi*]. They ordered people [*villagers*] to guard the heads and said that if the heads were lost they would be replaced by the heads of those who had been guarding them and lost them. People on sentry duty watched them all day and night. They finally threw the heads away when they were decomposing. They had been hanging there for over a month before they finally ordered them thrown away.

Q: Do they demand that people give them anything?

A: They demand that people give them a lot. When they enter the villages they tell the villagers, "The forest people have come to your village, so if you want to live peacefully come and give me money." Villagers from each village have to bribe them with hundreds of thousands [*of kyat*]. What they said about the forest people entering the villages isn't true, they just lie to the villagers to get money. They demand alcohol, bags and clothing. People bought them things worth 2-3,000 *kyat* but they didn't like them, they wanted things worth 4-5,000 *kyat*. They required two bicycles but they didn't want bikes worth 4-5,000 *kyat*, they demanded bikes worth 15-20,000 *kyat*. If they see business people, like traders of rice, beans and pigs, they rough them up and take their money. Business people have to avoid them if they hear they're in the area. That's true, they really have taken people's money like that.

Q: Are they the group that is called "Short Pants"?

A: Yes, people call them *Baw Bi Doh* [*'short pants'*], but they don't like that so they ordered people to call them *Thad Shin A'Pweh* [*'killing and clearing group'*]. Later, they didn't like that either and forced people to call them *Shwit A'Pweh* [*'shwit' group*]. They say that the sound of cutting someone's throat with a knife is "*shwit*".

Q: Do you know of anything else the *Sa Thon Lon* have been doing recently?

A: The *Sa Thon Lon* are killing all the dogs in the villages because they don't like the dogs barking when they arrive during the night. If the dogs bark at them, the villagers will know that they have arrived. They beat the dogs to death and then they beat the owners of the dogs [*which bark at them*]. If they shoot the dog dead, then they beat the owner and also demand 500 *Kyat* for the cost of the bullet after they beat him. They have ordered villagers in the area of Way Sweh, T'Kaw Pwa and Nga Byaw Daw villages to kill all their dogs. The dead dogs filled two bullock-carts and were discarded outside of the villages. Now there are no dogs there. I even had to kill my own dog. In Yan Myo Aung 10 dogs were killed, but in Twa Ni Gone, Haw Ko Ghaw, Lu Ah, Weh Gyi and T'Kaw Pwa all the dogs were killed.

Q: Do they walk during the night?

A: They only walk during the night and sleep during the day. If they are in Haw Ko Ghaw, they can come to Yan Myo Aung in one night. If they want to go from Kyo Ber Tha to Haw Ko Ghaw, they can do that in one night also. During the day they sleep in people's houses but they never introduce themselves to the owners of the house, they never make friends with them. They live there with faces of stone and eat whatever they want to. They never look at the faces of the people they are staying with because they are afraid the villagers may be able to recognise them. They never make friends with any villagers. They don't have people staying in every village at the same time, but they move around and sometimes stay in Haw Ko Ghaw, or Thit Cha Seik, or Yay Leh, or Nga Nwah Seit, or Weh Tu, or sometimes in Yan Myo Aung. They move around like that and don't really have a home base. Sometimes they go to Thit Cha Seik, Ter Bpaw and Po Thaug Su and then leave. They kill people wherever they go.

One of them got married in Nga Nwah Seit. His name is Bo Maung Maung, he is from the *Sa Thon Lon*. He asked the girl's parents to give him their daughter, and she didn't like him but she had to marry him. People in the countryside are forced to marry them. They wrote letters to each of the villages and the village leaders had to collect enough money from all the villagers to pay for the food that was going to be prepared and for the clothing and jewellery, a necklace and earrings for the bride. The elders from my village of Yan Myo Aung collected money from the villagers and the whole village had to pay 17,000 *kyat*. I don't know what other villages had to pay but big villages had to give more. He [*Bo Maung Maung*] showed movies in each village before the wedding to make money. Each person had to pay 50 *kyat* for each night the movies were showing regardless of whether they went to see the movie or not. In our village [*Yan Myo Aung relocation site*] they showed movies on two nights so we had to pay 100 *kyat* each. One movie was an English movie and the other was Burmese, but I don't know the titles of the movies because I'm not interested in movies. The village elders couldn't do anything, they could only tell us that we had to pay whether we went or not, so some villagers went and watched the movies. After the wedding he [*Bo Maung Maung*] had a house built in Nga Nwah Seit. It was a brick house and the villagers had to bring the bricks as well as build the house. All the expense and labour that went into that house came from the villagers.

Q: Do they ever capture and abuse women?

A: When they see women and girls on their way somewhere, they ask them whether they have passes. They take the pass and ask their names. If the name that they give is one letter longer or shorter [*than the name on the pass*], they beat them. When they see girls who are quite pretty, they put powder on their own faces and then force the girls to kiss them until the powder is gone. As for women or girls who have no pass, they force them to take off their clothes and sit in front of them naked. The girls feel shy and sit shyly but they don't like that, they force them to sit in the open so they can see everything on their bodies. If he [*a Sa Sa Sa soldier*] likes a girl, he asks her to love him and if she doesn't love him he demands that the village headman speak on his behalf. If the village headman can't convince her, they will kill the village headman. If the parents of the girl don't agree, they kill her parents. We saw a girl in Lu Ah treated this way. Shan Bpu [*a Sa Sa Sa group commander*] asked the village headman, her parents and the villagers to give her to him. Both her parents and the village headman had to tell her to marry him. The villagers told her the same thing. They said, "If you don't marry him they will kill us all, as the village headman and your parents told you." Finally, she had to give herself to the Burmese [*soldier*] because she loves her parents, the village headman and the villagers. She gave herself sadly. She told her husband [*Shan Bpu*] that she would pray for him every night. Her husband asked, "What do you pray for?" She answered, "May Kawthoolei [*KNU/KNLA*] people not shoot you dead and may you not die by a landmine." Then he asked, "Why?" She answered, "If the Kawthoolei shoot you or your men dead or if you die by a KNLA landmine, you will come back and beat and kill the villagers. That is why I pray you don't die this way. I pray that a snake will bite and kill you!" He didn't understand and asked her again, "Why do you pray for a snake to bite me?" She said, "If a snake bites you and you die, you can't kill the villagers and if you want to kill the snake, you can't chase it. That's why I pray for you this way." She was crying when they first got married and after they were married she was still crying because she doesn't like him. Now her husband has called her to go and live in another area but she didn't go, so he said that she was too attached to her house and returned to burn down his father-in-law's house. When he had finished burning his father-in-law's house he was worried that people would say "He's the one who burned his own father-in-law's house", so he burned down every house in the village. He told his wife, "I have burned your house because of your attachment to it." Then her father got angry, he stuck out his chest and said, "My daughter is still attached to me and her siblings, so shoot us all dead so that she can go with you. If you don't kill us all, you won't be able to make her go with you." But Shan Bpu didn't shoot him.

Interview: 11: Forced rice quota, forced relocation, forced portering, forced labour,

Name:	"Saw Min Shwe"
Sex:	Male
Age:	56
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Christian

Marital Status: Married, five children aged 4-26, some other children already died
Address: Zee Byu Gone village, Tantabin township
Date of Interview: February 1999
Source: KHRG

["Saw Min Shwe" was interviewed just after arriving in Thailand as a refugee.]

Q: Where is your village?

A: My original village was Dta Weh Dah, but I went to work near Tantabin and got married there, so I settled down there. I lived in Taw Ta Tu area, they call it Tantabin township. My village, Zee Byu Gone, is not near any town. When I was there I worked in my fields.

Q: Can you tell us why you came here?

A: I came here because the Burmese tortured us until we had no time left to do our own work, they forced us to work for them so much. As less and less time was left for us to do our own work we produced less and less food, until it was not enough for us to survive anymore. So we came here.

Q: How did the Burmese make you suffer in Taw Ta Tu township?

A: As for me, I suffered because I am a farmer and I was working my fields, but then the Burmese soldiers told us that the fields we were working were fields of the government. That means fields of the Burmese. Then they decreed that one acre of field can yield seventy baskets [*of unhusked rice*] so we must give them fifty baskets from each acre. But our fields do not even yield 50 baskets per acre, so we couldn't give them what they demanded from us. Fifty baskets was the very top yield we could ever get. Therefore they made problems for us. If you couldn't give it they arrest you and put you in the stocks, they forced you to dig their ponds and do other work. As for me, they never arrested me because I tried very hard to give whatever they ordered [*he bought or borrowed rice to fill the quota*], but I still had to go and do their *loh ah pay* [*'voluntary' labour, actually forced labour*] many times, such as digging ponds and digging the path. I had to go because I had no money to hire someone else [*to go for him; he was never taken for failure to pay quota, but he had to go whenever the troops made their regular demands for forced labourers*]. My children had to go too. Other times they captured me and I had to do *loh ah pay*. I couldn't take it so I set out to come here. I'm telling you the truth, I'm telling you what I have suffered.

They also forced us to leave our houses and go to live near the car road where there is a relocation site. Our village is at the foot of the mountains, and they made us go live near the car road at a place called Taw Ma Aye. That was three or four years ago. After they forced us to go to the relocation site they killed some people in the forest, and they arrested some people and put them in jail.

Q: Did they force only Zee Byu Gone village to go there?

A: No; Sha Yi Bo, Zee Byu Gone, Taw Gu, Yay Sha and many villages around there had to go. All. They gathered us there and showed us the area where we had to live but they didn't give us food. We had to go back and work our old fields, but it was difficult and we couldn't

get enough food to eat. Our field is in Zee Byu Gone so we had to go back and work in Zee Byu Gone. It is two hours' walk. They gave us a pass for three days [*at a time*]. Then we had to come back every three days to get another pass for another three days. But even during those three days [*when you are at your fields with a pass*], if their troop patrols saw you along their way they called you over and harassed you, so you couldn't do your work. The people from the other villages had to live the same way as me.

Q: When you went back to do your work did they ever grab you [*for detention or labour*]?

A: They didn't grab me when I went to my old village, but they grabbed me when I went to cut bamboo on the mountain. They captured me and told me to stay with them for only one day but then forced me to live with them for a week, sometimes more than one week, and they didn't give me enough rice to eat. Each time I came back home after that I felt sick of that kind of thing, because it took away the time I need to work for my family. That is why I am here.

Q: Did you have to give porter fees?

A: If you don't have time to go you must give porter fees, sometimes 1,000 and sometimes 2,000 *kyat*, or amounts like that. If you have no money to give porter fees and you go [*for the labour*] yourself, it is very hard because they don't give you enough rice to eat so you don't have enough strength to carry their heavy things. When you feel tired and can't carry they beat you. Some people have died when they were portering. All of the abuses they have committed - you just can't describe them all because there are too many, so I'm just telling you what I myself have suffered and what I have seen. I didn't go as a porter, but I had to go and do *loh ah pay* many times.

Q: How many times did you have to go?

A: Sometimes once a month, sometimes twice a month, and each month we also had to give money to reimburse people for whatever the soldiers had eaten in the village, like pigs or chickens [*after SPDC troops steal livestock, the villagers collect money to reimburse the livestock owners in order to distribute the cost evenly*]. We are forced to give 100 or 200 [*per family*] every time they come and eat things in the village. Money is not easy for us to get, so sometimes we couldn't give it and they sent us to do *loh ah pay* when we couldn't give money [*the village authorities are always ordered to send numbers of forced labourers to the Army, so they send those who cannot pay money to reimburse the other villagers for SPDC looting*]. I'm telling you exactly what I have suffered.

Q: What kind of labour did you have to do as *loh ah pay*?

A: Go dig the road, go dig ponds [*fishponds for the Army*] and many other kinds of labour, whatever they forced you to do. I had to go and dig dirt on the path. They put big piles of dirt on the path and forced you to dig. If they said to do one armspan then I had to dig one armspan. It wasn't a car road, just a path for them to travel along.

Q: Do they have a camp at Zee Byu Gone?

A: They don't have a camp there but they often travel to Zee Byu Gone, so they force people to dig [repair] that path every year when it is destroyed. People have to dig it every year.

Q: Did they give you rice to eat when you were doing *loh ah pay*?

A: *Ahh lah!!* We had to take our own rice with us. They never give us rice to eat. Sometimes we have to work for two or three days.

Q: What do they do with the ponds they force you to dig?

A: I haven't gone to see them after they've been finished but people told me they are raising fish and planting banana trees around the pond. It was at a place above Taw Ma Aye, beside the car road.

Q: What Battalion are those soldiers from?

A: I don't know which battalion because they change all the time. I only know the name of the commander who came a long time ago and stayed for a long time; his name was Soe Tha. Since then there have been many commanders but I don't know any of them. Even their soldiers don't know them. We just had to work for them, until we were finished whatever work they forced us to do.

Q: Are they still killing people this year?

A: It is still happening, but as for me I just worked in the village and they couldn't capture me to be a long distance porter. I had to go but just near our area. As for the people who have to go [*as porters*] to places further away like Kler Lah, we've heard of some of them being beaten to death. But we only had to go to Swa Ler, K'Waw Kheh Der, Ko Mi Der and Play Sha Ler. I had to carry cookpots, rice and their other rations. They never beat me, but they shouted at me and slapped me.

Q: When did the Burmese start forcing people there to pay fees and do *loh ah pay* and portering?

A: I didn't take note, but I think it was ten years ago. Since my eldest child was small. Since the Burmese soldiers entered the area. When I was single and first married the situation was good and we were free to work, but since the Burmese came there has been no freedom for us. We had to run to escape from them whenever we were working because we didn't want to do porting when they captured us. After suffering abuse by the Burmese as I've described, I'm worried that my children will have to suffer it much more in the future than I have. That's why I moved from place to place and eventually came here.

Q: What were your sons doing for a living?

A: One hired himself out to take care of another person's elephant and another one lived with me. If you all live in the house together it is not easy to survive, so I asked one of my sons to go and take care of a rich person's elephant. The pay is 20,000 *kyat* for a year, but you have to eat and pay all the [*SPDC*] fees, so 20,000 *kyat* cannot support you for a year. This season I didn't work on my fields, I just helped my son with the elephant and did some day labour. I knew that life for my children would only get worse and worse in the future, so we came here. Now all of us have come here. If we go back the Burmese will only torture us more, so we don't dare go back.

Q: Did you ever work for the KNU?

A: I never did that.

Q: Did KNU/KNLA members ever come to your place?

A: They arrived. Battles occurred sometimes. If battles occurred the Burmese came and beat and tortured our village head. They accused him of having contact with the *tha bone* [*'rebels'*] and feeding the *tha bone*. But if you think about it, they are your people [*i.e. Karens*] so you feed them. Could you stay without feeding your own people?

Q: Do the Burmese troops eat your livestock when they enter your village?

A: Some Burmese commanders are very bad and hate Karen people, so they shoot livestock in the village whenever they come, but some commanders are kind and they ask for permission before they eat our livestock. As for me, I was busy with my field and *loh ah pay* so I didn't rear any animals and I didn't have any livestock for them to eat, but I myself was abused often.

Q: Do the Burmese soldiers eat people's rice when they come to your village?

A: They didn't just eat it, they also destroyed the rice of the villagers by burning it. When they saw the paddy of the villagers in the hills, they forced villagers [*at the relocation site*] to go up and carry that paddy down to them. Not only the paddy from around my village [*Zee Byu Gone*], but from the hills all around that area where people stored their paddy. I thought they would take it to eat, but when the villagers had carried it down to them they threw it all in the bushes and burned all of it. That happened just before I left the village [*to flee to Thailand*]. I left in the first week of January [1999].

Q: In that area can you get any day labour to earn money?

A: There is day labour. The pay for one day is one bowl [*8 small milkbins, about 1.5-2 kg/ 4 lb*] of rice. That is for day labour transplanting paddy seedlings. If they pay money it is 100 *kyat* per day. In hot season you can go and gather betelnut and betel leaves, but you need a pass to go and the pass costs 5 *kyat*. It is easy for us to work for money, but if you work for money then you aren't free to go for *loh ah pay*, so you have to pay the *loh ah pay* fees when you come back from making money. I saw that we could never get anything that way, so we came here. Your Aunty here [*his wife*] is always ill. If you had seen her when she was on the way here you would know how hard it was for her. Even now she's still not healthy, but she goes to the clinic here and gets medicine so she is getting better.

Q: How did you come here?

A: We didn't have enough money to make the trip here so we waited for our brothers and sisters to join with us and take us. We came by way of the towns [*southward through central Burma, then east to the border*]. They [*his relatives*] took us to K— one by one, and then we reunited with each other there and came here. We had to sleep one night on the way to K—, then we came by the jungle paths and followed other people who were coming here [*from Pa-an District*]. It was very difficult coming here from K

Interview: 12: Forced Portering, Torture, Beating

Name: "Saw Thay Htoo"

Sex: Male

Age: 35

Ethnicity: Karen

Occupation: Farmer
Religion: Animist
Marital Status: Married, had five children but 2 died;
3 surviving children aged 10-12
Address: Thaton township, Karen State
Date of Interview: April 1999
Place of Interview: Near his village in Burma
Source: KHRG

Q: Did the SPDC troops ever come to your village?

A: Yes. Recently they came one time to the village. They came before the water festival [*which occurred in mid-April 1999*]. When they came to the village there was shooting [*they encountered the KNLA*] and then the people [*KNLA*] fled, so they fined the villagers. They fined us 2½ baskets of rice and one pig.

Q: What would they do if you didn't pay the fine?

A: They don't like it if the villagers don't pay. If we didn't give it to them they would abuse the villagers. They've done that before. If villagers flee when they come, they fine us, and if porters flee and escape, they fine us for that too. Each person has to give five *viss* [8 kg / 17.5 lb] of pork.

Q: Have you ever gone portering?

A: I've always had to go portering! They don't give food to the porters. The porters have to take along rice, salt, chillies and everything for themselves. Sometimes we sleep in villagers' houses, and sometimes we sleep in the jungle. They guard us closely. Sometimes they kick the porters. When people get sick they don't take care of them well. They give some medicine, and when porters can't walk they leave them. One porter who got bad diarrhoea couldn't climb the mountain, so they got annoyed and kicked him down the mountainside. He was a villager from Naw Yo Hta village. I don't know his name. Then they gave him a bit of medicine and forced him to walk and carry a load again.

Q: Have the KNLA ever beaten you?

A: No, the KNLA never beat me. The SPDC tortured me though. On the 6th day of Dta Baun [*March 7, 1999*] they beat my head and broke the skin. They entered the village at 9 p.m. There were about seventy soldiers, and they arrested me while I was pounding paddy. They asked me, "Have any Karen soldiers come to the village?" I said, "Sometimes they enter the village." Then he asked me, "When Karen soldiers come do they eat and drink, and whose field do they stay in?" I couldn't answer him so he beat me. The one who beat me was a commander with three stars [*Captain*]. He beat me with a wooden stick as thick as my wrist, and over an armspan long. He hit me three times on the head, and the skin on my scalp was broken so he stopped hitting me there. Then he started beating my shins about twenty or thirty times. After that they tied me up with my hands behind my back and sutured my head. They sutured my head three times. After that I couldn't walk for ten days. Then he told me to go and summon the village headman. Before I reached the village headman's place, they left and went down to xxxx village. Five days later, they moved to

another place and were replaced by new troops.

Q: When they beat you did they beat anyone else?

A: Before they beat me, they beat one of the village women. Her name is M—, she lives in T— village. It was the same troops who beat me. That was when the Karen [*soldiers*] were celebrating Karen New Year [*in January 1999*]. The Burmese were going to shoot at them and they saw a dog, it was her dog. Later they went and asked M—, “This is your dog and it was there [*at the KNLA celebration*], so you also must have been there”. She answered, “I didn’t go there, and this is not my dog either.” Then the officer said, “This is your dog, and if you didn’t go then your husband must have been there”. That’s why they beat her. They hit her on the head, but she had a wrap on her head [*a towel or cloth which Karen women often wear wrapped around their heads like a turban, and which would have protected her a bit from the blows*]. They hit her thirty or forty times on her head. I saw them beat her. They beat her savagely. They beat her with the same size of stick that they used to beat me. They hit her with the end of the stick.

Q: Was she alright afterwards?

A: She suffered for many days. She had to smear the wounds with yellow spirit powder.

Q: Didn’t the SPDC take care of her?

A: No, they didn’t. I suffered for many days too, but they put a little medicine on my wound [*when they sutured it*]. Now my leg is also still in pain. He beat me on the shins, and I couldn’t walk until ten days later.

Q: When the SPDC troops came to the village do they ever take anything from the villagers?

A: They always do that. They never ‘organise’ the villagers [*this term translates as ‘organise’ and is commonly used in Burma; it means to rally people to support you, or in this case to implement a ‘hearts and minds’ campaign*]. They just rob the villagers, they take things like our pots and plates, then they take the paddy from our paddy storage barns and pound it, then they eat it. They came in September [*1998*] and did all of that.

Interview: 13: Forced portering, forced labour, extortion, forced relocation, Sa Thone Lone Guerilla Unit

Name:	“Saw Dee Ghay”
Sex:	Male
Age:	38
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Christian
Marital Status:	Married with three children
Address:	Sweh Dtee village, Kyauk Kyi township
Date of Interview:	April 1999

[“Saw Dee Ghay” is the husband of “Naw K’Ser Tee” (see Interview below). He was

forcibly relocated, and when interviewed had just arrived in Thailand as a refugee.]

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: Today. We came because the *Baw Bi Doh [Short Pants]* force of the government forced us to work unfairly.

Q: Did you have to go for *loh ah pay*?

A: Yes, I had to go. I had to go four or five times per month, every month. For portering, I had to carry rice or shells. We had to go for portering in turns. The last time I went I had to carry about 20 *viss [32 kg / 70 lb]* of shells. We had to porter for two days but we had to sleep there [*at the Army camp*] for two or three nights. We also had to go for sentry duty, each time for two days. They forced us to work for them every day. For *loh ah pay*, we had to cut down the whole forest so they could see anyone who might be walking there. We had to cut three or four *khah* each day for a whole week. They are trying to clear all the trees between Kyun Gyi and Sweh Dtee. They didn't give us any food while we were working, we had to take our own. We had to go in the morning and return in the evening. They forced us to do it every day until we finished. They forced us to work until we couldn't work anymore. We had no time to do our own work, we only did work for them.

Q: Did you have to build roads?

A: In the past we didn't have to, but just before we came here they forced the villagers to dig a path. Cars can't go on it, only bicycles can. It takes about 2 hours to walk the length of the path.

Q: How did you tend your field?

A: We had to leave it. When we had time to work on our fields, we had to go and come back in the same day. At this time of day there [*evening*], they shut the gate and you can't go. They told us that they could shut the gate for two or three days if they wanted to, so that nobody could get food to eat. Nobody dared to say anything. Almost everyone is suffering from poverty but no one dares to say anything. People must suffer quietly.

Q: Are there any villagers who go hungry because they don't have rice for every meal?

A: Yes, there are many.

Q: Where is their Army camp?

A: Their camps are in Kyun Gyi, Hintha Weh and Thay Payaung Dan. I don't know their Battalion number but people call them *Baw Bi Doh [Short Pants, i.e. Sa Sa Sa Guerrilla Retaliation troops]*. They demanded we give them a chicken every day. We had to buy the chickens for them. When they demanded alcohol they didn't like the local rice whisky, they liked the alcohol that people sell in town. They demanded things like that for a long time, until the villagers couldn't support it any longer. If you do something they don't like they kill you, so some people joined the DKBA to avoid being killed.

Q: Did you ever see them kill anyone?

A: No. They didn't kill anyone in our village but they killed many people in other villages.

They once held a meeting where I heard them say, “Whenever I go out [*on patrol*] you will hear that I have killed people.” The villagers talked about them killing people but we didn’t dare to say what we had heard because we were afraid they would kill us.

Q: What is the aim of the *Baw Bi Doh*?

A: I don’t know.

Q: Are there any DKBA in that area?

A: Yes, there are. They live separately from the *Baw Bi Doh*. The DKBA live in Klaw Maw. They came to the village and demanded rice, they didn’t pay for it and then they went back. When they are angry, they are even harsher than the *Baw Bi Doh*. Villagers told me that the DKBA beat people from Hintha Weh, which is about fifteen minutes’ walk from my village. I had to work on a pagoda for the DKBA a few times. They’re building it on the flat land outside Kyun Gyi. I had to carry stones for two or three days at a time. Ten people had to go each time, and then we had to go again if it wasn’t finished.

Q: When did you have to relocate from Sweh Dtee?

A: This year. We had to relocate because we were near a mountain. In the past the KNLA came and fought in that area, but since the DKBA and the *Baw Bi Doh* have come we only hear about the KNLA sometimes. Some people relocated to B’Deh Gaung and some went to Kaw Tha Say, but we went to Kyun Gyi. Kyun Gyi is two hours’ walk from Sweh Dtee.

Q: Is the situation now getting better or worse?

A: In the past it was better and now it’s getting worse. People can’t tolerate it anymore. Some people would like to flee but they don’t know how or where to go.

Interview: 14: Shot by SPDC, Cruel Treatment, Extortion

Name:	”Pu Dta Ler”
Sex:	Male
Age:	50-60
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital Status:	Married, three children
Address:	Pah Klu village, T’Nay Hsah township, Karen State
Date of Interview:	April 1999
Source:	KHRG

Q: Can you tell me the story about how the Burmese shot you?

A: I decided to go and hire myself out to get some money to cure my child with bad legs. When I arrived at the other side of the river, I didn’t know that the Burmese had arrived. There were not many of them, not more than ten soldiers. I was outside the village, but they were inside the village when they shot at me. The young man from my village who had

come with me ran from behind me and passed me. The Burmese shot at him but hit my leg instead, so I fell down. They didn't come to look at me, and they went away. I was left alone for a while until I saw a young woman who was coming back from gathering firewood. I told her to go back and tell my son to come and get me. She told my son and he came and carried me to the village.

Q: Did the Burmese know that you had been hurt?

A: They said that they didn't know. When people went and told them that I was hurt, they asked my son to carry me to Ker Ghaw. They gave me one injection when I arrived there. I bled a lot. When I was in my village, someone gave me an injection of medicine. When I arrived at Ker Ghaw, it seemed that they didn't care about me even though I had gone with them to Ker Ghaw as soon as they called me there. When I arrived at Ker Ghaw, they gave me 3,000 *kyat* and told me to go to Myawaddy Hospital. How would 3,000 *kyat* be enough? I stayed there for ten days and they took care of me while I still had money, but when my money ran out they stopped taking care of me. When it was gone, I had to go back to my village again. Then I asked people to treat my wound with traditional medicine and holy oil. I can't stand up yet because it is painful.

Q: Had the Burmese ever come to your village before?

A: Yes, they come to my village often and whenever they come they shoot villagers. The other time they came they shot a man named Htay Lah. He is Karen and a villager. He was eating rice at his wife's parents' house when they shot him. He wasn't wearing clothes while he was eating, only short pants. They started shooting into the house, so he stopped eating and ran down to the ground. He ran and they shot him to death. They accused him of being Nga Pway [*'Ringworm' derogatory SPDC slang for KNLA soldier*]. People told them, "He is not Nga Pway; he is a villager. Look in his house - there are no weapons!" When they came another time, they shot dead two villagers at Thay Po Kyu too. After they shot those two villagers, they shot Htay Lah, then me.

Q: Did the Burmese who shot you appear in your village again before you fled here?

A: No, but now the DKBA is there to do logging. They went to pull out all the big old logs that they have been cutting down.

Q: Did you tell the DKBA that the Burmese had shot at villagers?

A: The village head told them, but they said they couldn't do anything after the person had been shot. They said he was shot accidentally.

Q: What had the villagers done to provoke the Burmese into shooting them?

A: The villagers didn't do anything to them. We even gave them whatever they wanted to eat such as pigs and chickens. They even killed cattle to eat without permission. They just took whatever they want by force. People dared not tell them anything. They just watched them. They even demanded rice and salt and chillies. People gave it to them because they were afraid.

Q: How did you feel after they shot at you and broke your leg?

A: I only felt sorrow because of the pain, and because I had to borrow money to cure myself. I had nothing to sell, no cattle, pigs, or chickens, because I had already sold everything to cure your Auntie [*his wife, who is infected with tuberculosis*].

Q: Was anyone else hurt at the same time as you?

A: They shot many times but only hit me. They also fired two mortars. When their commander asked them [*later*] they said that a small battle had occurred with the KNLA and that they had accidentally hit a villager. For sure there was no battle, because there were no KNLA there. They just shot at a villager who was running.

Q: Do you think the villagers still worry?

A: When the DKBA was logging, the KNLA went to disturb them and the DKBA said that if they thought they couldn't fight back against the KNLA, they would ask the Burmese Army to help them. Therefore the villagers are worried.

Q: Will you go back to your village?

A: If I go back to my village, I'll have no rice to eat. My children have been working in the fields, but since there was no rain we didn't get enough rice. My daughter has two small children, and my daughter-in-law also has two small children who are still breastfeeding. My daughter-in-law is ill in the hospital. When we are cured, we would like to stay here as refugees with all our children, but we don't have any money to build a house.

Interview: 15: Forced Labour, Forced Portering, Torture, Extortion, Landmines

Name:	“Maung Hla”
Sex:	Male
Age:	30
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital Status:	Married, three children
Address:	Kru Bper village, Kawkareik township, Karen State
Date of Interview:	April 1999
Source:	KHRG

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: I arrived here five days ago.

Q: Why did you come here?

A: We had to do forced labour, such as planting paddy for the Burmese every day until we had no time to do our own work. We also had to serve as porters. Anytime they called us we had to go because we did not have money to flee. That's why we came here with our families.

Q: When the Burmese troops entered your village, what did they do?

A: When the Burmese troops came to our village, they ate any livestock they saw. We dared not complain to them because if we did they shot us with a slingshot.

Q: This year did you have to do forced labour or portering?

A: We had to go every day and every month. We had to dig and work the fields for the Burmese and also build roads and bunkers. Sometimes it took us three or four days, and sometimes one week. We had to go to T'Nay Hsah, Maw Ghaw and other areas. We were in their grip, so we dared not stay in the village without doing what they ordered us to do.

Q: What was the number of the Burmese Battalion that ordered you to work?

A: I don't know, but there are Burmese battalion camps in Kawkareik. There are two Army camps near our village. One is in Mya Pa Deh [*called Myapadine by the Burmese*], and another is in Kru Bper Kaw Day Kyay. T'Nay Hsah camp is far from our village. People in Mya Pa Deh township must go to Mya Pa Deh camp, but we must go to Kru Bper camp for *loh ah pay*.

Q: What kind of work do you do at the camp?

A: At the Burmese camp now there is a farm, so we must go to plough, sow, and transplant paddy in their field. If you have buffaloes and a plough, you must go to plough, and if you have nothing you must go to dig the earth, sow, and transplant. At harvest time, they force people to reap for them until it is finished. As for us, we don't even have enough food for our own family, and no time to work for ourselves. We always have to work for them, which is why we couldn't tolerate it and decided to come and live here with our relatives.

Q: Which road did you have to build?

A: The road that leads from Kawkareik to Mya Pa Deh and T'Nay Hsah. The width of the road is approximately 10 cubits [*15 feet*]. We had to dig earth and put it on the road to build its height to 4 or 5 cubits [*8-foot high embankment*]. People from the whole village had to go. If you had money you could hire others, but if you didn't have money you had to go. People who had bullock carts had to go with bullock carts. We had to take our own rice, fishpaste, and chillies from our house. We even had to take our own machetes, axes, mattocks and spades.

Q: What did you do in Maw Ghaw?

A: I had to plant rubber. They have already planted many rubber trees in lines. Many people had to go, so we had to do it for two to three days, then we went home. They didn't give us anything to eat. We had to take our own food there too, but they gave medicine to the workers who were ill, and if they couldn't work anymore they sent them home.

Q: If you couldn't work, did you hire others to go in your place?

A: We had to give 200 *kyat* a day. If someone works five days for us, we must pay him 1,000 *kyat*. If we couldn't go and couldn't hire another person to go for us, they [*Burmese*] would come and give us problems, like fining us. We dared not face that. Even the very poor people had to pay 200 or 300 *kyat* for porter fees [*extortion money in addition to payments*]

to hire substitute labour]. We paid big fees three or four times a month and small fees four or five times a month. Some months we had to pay a total of 2,000 *kyat*, but some months we paid 3,000 *kyat* [*per family*]. If we couldn't pay the village head might take away our precious things, such as cooking pots and other things that he could sell to get enough to pay the fee. He is the Burmese village head [*the village head appointed by the SPDC*].

Q: Did you ever have to serve as a porter?

A: I had to go once. It was three months ago. I can't remember the date, but it was during the time that people reap paddy. They came and captured me from my house. I had to porter for them for ten days, then I escaped. I escaped when people [*KNLA*] were shooting at them. We were in the middle of them. They were guarding us, but when people shot at them, we ran and escaped. Many of my friends stepped on bamboo spike traps and landmines.

Q: Which battalion captured you?

A: I don't know. They just came from the camp in our village at Kaw Day Kyay. They captured nine people. They captured me in my village while I was eating rice. They came and called to me in Burmese language, "Come down, come down", so I had to come down from the house. They told me that I must go for *loh ah pay* for moment. Their 'moment' lasted a long time!

Q: What did you have to carry?

A: They forced me to carry 12 of the 2.5 inch shells. It was over ten *viss* [*16 kg / 35 lb*]. I had to carry them from my village to Ker Ghaw. They gave us very little rice to eat; two of us had to share one small plastic bag of rice. Sometimes the rice was not well cooked. We did not have enough water to drink because they rushed us. We had to eat [*the stems of*] wild banana trees to curb our hunger.

Q: How many people ran with you when you escaped?

A: Nine of us. We all wished to run, but one of us dared not come with us when we called him, so he is still with the Burmese. Eight of my friends ran with me, and porters from other villages ran too. I know two porters who are still left with the Burmese. The places where we ran were full of landmines. We didn't know the direction to run, but we ran ahead and reached Pah Klu even though we'd never been there before. When we arrived at Pah Klu, the Sgaw [*Sgaw Karen; he is Pwo Karen*] women asked us, "How could you dare to come back this way? Landmines are everywhere. We are surprised to see you arrive here safely." Some people ran into Burmese soldiers, though, so the soldiers tortured them.

Q: When you portered, did the Burmese soldiers ever torture you?

A: They beat me on the temples once. I tied up my load to the baskets and the soldier asked me, "Is that tied tightly?" and I answered him, "It is tight." But when we were marching the shells fell down, so he beat me on the temple. Another time he kicked me with his jungle boots when I was picking up the fallen rice grains on the ground to eat. When we arrived at a place where people had lived and recently left, I picked up some rice to eat to curb my hunger since I hadn't eaten enough rice. He asked me, "Why do you pick up that rice to eat? If they have poisoned it, you will die." And he kicked me with his boots on the head.

Interview: 16: Life as an IDP in the jungle, Extra-judicial killing, forced relocation, forced portering

Name: "Klaw Reh"
Sex: Male
Age: 45
Occupation: N/A
Marital Status: Married. two children aged 11 and 16. Wife is 30 years old.
Address: Kyu Leh [*Su Leh, village #17*], in Shadaw area.
Date of Interview: April 1999
Source: KHRG

Q: How many people came here with you?

A: 382 people. They live separately. Some people are in Section *x* [*of the refugee camp*] and others are in Sections *x*, *x* and *x*.

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: I arrived on January 16, 1999. I came from the forest. We went to hide in the forest and then finally came here. The Burmese came here and there [*everywhere*] and if they saw us, they captured and beat us so we had to go hide in the forest. They wanted us to go live in Shadaw. We didn't dare go to Shadaw. They forced villagers from all villages [*in the area*] to go live in Shadaw, however, [*many*] people didn't dare go to live there so they ran to live in the forest.

Q: When did they force people to go to Shadaw?

A: [*They've been doing that*] since three years ago. They sent letters [*to the villages*] which said, "If you are still not living in Shadaw by this date, we will regard you as our enemies when we come to clear the land." They really came! They captured people in our village and then killed them. They captured five people, all male, on the fields in an old village and killed four of them after one person fled and escaped. The names of those killed were Ah Tun, Ker Reh, Moo Reh and Moo. As for the Shan person, N—, who owned the field, he ran away and escaped before they could kill him. He was tied to a tree with rope and they almost shot him. He pushed off the rope and rolled himself down the slope of the hill and then finally was able to return. He didn't come here but [*I'm not sure why*], maybe he has some sort of problem preventing him from coming. That was a long time ago, in 1998, but I don't know which month. It was paddy sowing time [*possibly June/July*].

Q: Were all four of the people who were killed Karenni?

A: No, some were Shan and some were Kayah. There were three Shan but one escaped so only two of them, [*Ah Tun and Moo*] were killed, the other two people who were killed, Moo Reh and Ker Reh, were Kayah. Moo Reh was about 45 years old and Ker Reh was about 20 years old. They both have families and Ker Reh's wife arrived here five days ago with some other people who arrived recently. Her name is O— and she has two children.

Q: Based on your own knowledge, how many people living in the jungle did the Burmese kill?

A: I know of five people. Meh Reh disappeared [*and is presumed dead*] but we never saw his dead body. The Burmese came when we were going to get a kind of liquid from a tree that can be used to make a torch. His friends ran away when they heard the sound of the Burmese. He is deaf so he didn't hear the Burmese coming and they captured him. After that we went to his place but we didn't see him. We did see a rod [*approximately 5 cm, 2 inches, in diameter*] with blood on it so I think they beat him to death with the rod.

Q: Did many people from your village go to Shadaw when they were forcing people to go there?

A: There were about thirty houses in our village and 6 of them went to Shadaw. Some also went to live [*in the area of*] the Pon River and some went to hide in the jungle. Now all [*of those six houses*] have left Shadaw except one. They lived in Shadaw for one year and couldn't take it any longer so they left and hid in the jungle.

Q: When Kyu Leh villagers were forced to go and live in Shadaw, did they force only Kyu Leh village to go or did they force any other villages also?

A: They forced the people from many villages, such as Thirida, Daw Tanaw, Leh Du, Tee Leh [*Pray Kyu Leh in Kayah*], Daw Klaw Leh, and many other villages. Pray Kyu Leh is to the east of Thirida and is also near our village, Kyu Leh. They demanded that we go live in Shadaw but people didn't want to go so some went to live in the jungle, some went to live near the Pon river and some went to live in Daw Ta Hay. Some of the people did go to live in Shadaw.

Q: How many people are living in the jungle?

A: I can't tell you how many people because we didn't live together. We lived far from each other. Sometimes, while we were moving from one hiding place to another, we came upon each other and ran away in fear. We were afraid of each other because [*each of us thought*] the other was the Burmese [*troops*]. When we meet each other we can't ask each other where we live because we are afraid and have to hide ourselves. Even though we occasionally met other villagers while we were looking for food, we don't know each other's hiding places.

Q: How many families were living with you in your hiding place?

A: There were eight families, all from my village. We all came here together as we are all related.

Q: When you hid in the jungle, did you hide near Kyu Leh village?

A: Yes, we hid in the jungle near Kyu Leh. Sometimes we had to change our place three or four times in one month. If the Burmese weren't coming, we could stay in one place for one or two months. Sometimes, when the Burmese were coming, we had to change our place three or four times in one day. It depended on the situation.

Q: Could you build your house?

A: If there are four people in the family, we made a floor [*big enough*] for four people to sleep on and made a roof with tarpaulin. People who had no tarpaulin, they made their roof with leaves. The situation wasn't good so we couldn't have large hillside fields and instead had to make small fields and hide our paddy after the harvest. There was less rain and water, but hillside fields don't need as much water as flat paddy fields.

Q: How did you get food when you were in the jungle?

A: In 1996 they gave us the letter [*telling them to relocate*] and after three or four months of forcing the villagers to relocate, they burned the village. [*At first*] we secretly went back to our farms and gardens to get food. There is no village anymore; all villages were burned along with all the rice and paddy in the villages. I was hiding in the jungle for three years. We had to find food in the forest most of the time. Even those who lived with them in the relocation site had to find food like us. They [*villagers from Shadaw*] came looking for vegetables and then went back to either sell them so they could buy rice or exchange them for rice. They were also looking for Wa U [*elephant foot yam*] to eat as we were. We ate that when we had no rice, but sometimes we had a bit of rice so we could cook it with rice also.

His wife: When we didn't have rice to eat we dug up elephant foot yams and brought them to our place. We slice them and then cover them with cloth and put them in water over night. We change the water each day for at least three days. We then squeeze out the liquid and put them in the sun to dry. Then we could cook and eat them.

Q: Couldn't you work on your fields?

A: We couldn't work in the fields because they would come and shoot us dead when they saw us working on fields. The four dead people I told you about before were killed when they saw them working in the fields. You see!

His wife: If they don't see you while you are working on the farm they uproot all the paddy or burn it all. Sometimes they collect paddy that has been harvested and burn it all.

Q: How many months did you have to go with no rice to eat?

A: We can't say how many months. Sometimes we didn't have anything to eat for a few days and sometimes we had no rice for five days. When we had rice we boiled it and drank it [*rice soup is made to add more volume to the small amount of rice that is available*]. When we had no rice, we ate plants and tubers.

Q: How could you get rice?

A: We secretly went to buy rice from Shadaw. When the situation was still good we worked so we had some money and belongings. We bought rice with the money and then finally had to sell our belongings to buy rice. We weren't allowed to be in the jungle so if they saw us they captured us. People couldn't travel without passes. If we lived with them in Shadaw they would treat us very badly, so we didn't want to go and live there.

His wife: We sold all the belongings we had in order to buy rice.

Q: Do they feed the people who are living in Shadaw?

A: No, they don't feed them. People there have to find their food on their own. They are able to go out and move about with a pass, but we had no rights to travel as they did. They force people to work for them too much. If they [*the villagers*] can work for themselves for one day they have to work for the government for 2 days.

Q: Do you know anyone from Shadaw who has come here?

A: I know one person, a man named S—, who came from Nwa La Bo relocation site.

Q: Did they arrest people in the jungle and force them to porter?

A: I was able to avoid them but they captured other people. Anytime I saw them I ran away. If they saw me it would have been better that they shot me dead rather than capture me because they treat you very badly if they capture you. B— and his elder brother, Mee Reh, were captured in our hiding place by the Burmese. They captured them while they were harvesting paddy. They forced them to porter for one month but they couldn't carry [*much*] so they beat and hit them a lot. Mee Reh couldn't [*walk*] anymore because he was tired so they tied rope around his neck and pulled him. He had no strength to walk and they just wanted to torture him. After pulling him by the neck for a while, they thought he was dead and left him. He wasn't dead and later returned to us. His brother, B—, also escaped during the night and came back to our place but Mee Reh died two months later. He couldn't do anything. He was sick all the time, coughing up blood, and then he finally died. The elder brother is dead and the younger one is still in the jungle. When B— first came back he was also coughing blood and he couldn't work but he can work a bit now.

Q: Was there any medicine in the jungle?

A: No medicine. He came back and was coughing blood and couldn't do anything. He was suffering from the beating and kicking the Burmese had given him. He was 50 years old and died when the harvest was finished in '98 or '97. That's the same year that the other four died.

Q: Where did they have to porter to?

A: They were travelling around. They [*the Burmese soldiers*] were just looking for people in the jungle and the porters had to carry their things. Each day we had to find [*another*] hiding place. We moved from place to place, one or two places every day. If they see anything in the old villages they will shoot. If they see people or buffaloes they shoot them dead. That's what they said [*they would do*]. They are trying to find us in the forest. After we had hidden in many hiding places we knew that they would find us some day so we went to Shan State. We couldn't live for long in Shan State so we came back to Kayah state again.

Q: When you were in the jungle were there any ill children?

A: Yes, there were. Some children were thin but others were bigger because they were suffering from oedema [*which swells up their bodies*]. We could only watch them. If they lived, they were lucky and if they died, they weren't lucky. In our hiding place there were eight families and five children died. Some of the old people were also ill but they didn't die.

Q: Could the children in the jungle study?

A: There was no teacher. We were on the run all the time so we couldn't ask teachers to join us.

Q: Do you know the names of the mother and daughter who were taken by the Burmese soldiers to sleep with them?

A: The mother's name is L— and her daughter's name is B—. We're not sure if they slept with them or not because we didn't go to see them. Their village is xxxx. They were living in the jungle and were going to their farm when the Burmese soldiers met them and took them to go and stay with them for a few nights. We don't know if they raped them or not. We don't know what they did with them, because they didn't say anything when they came back.

Q: Did you ever go to Shan State?

A: While we were living for three years in the jungle, a battle occurred between Karenni soldiers and Burmese soldiers at Lweh Pee, which is a mountain. There's no village there, it's above Daw Tanaw. In 1998, at the beginning of the harvest [*Oct./Nov.*], I went to live in Shan State, on the other side of the river that defines the border, for a month in order to find refuge. We were staying in a place between xxxx and xxxx. We went there before harvesttime and returned later to harvest our paddy. Our farm still had paddy when we returned, but the farms near the path had all been destroyed. After the battle, the Burmese were looking for people in the jungle. We didn't let the Shan people know we were there because we were afraid they would tell the Burmese and the Burmese would come to find us.

Q: When you went to Shan State, how many families went with you?

A: The 8 families we were with together in the jungle. We didn't know about other families living in different areas of the jungle. We didn't know where they hid when the Burmese came or if they had gone to the Shan side or not. When the Burmese come, they even kill villagers. If they can capture them, they torture them before killing them. Some of the people they capture and torture aren't killed, instead they force them to go with them and carry things for them.

Q: How many days did it take you to come here from your hiding place?

A: 8 days. We came out in the evening. We had troubles climbing up and down the mountains because some of the people were ill, but we didn't see any Burmese on the way. Each of us carried 30 milktins [*about 8 kg / 18 lb*] of rice for the journey. We walked through the jungle [*not along the path*] on our way here from our jungle hiding place. We came through the jungle so we wouldn't see any landmines. If we had come by the path, there would have been landmines.

Q: Have you ever come here before?

A: No, but in the past, when the situation was good we came in this direction to sell things, so we guessed the direction [*to come here*] and came through the jungle. We didn't dare walk too close or too far from the path.

Interview: 17: Forced labour, Sa Thone Lone Guerilla Unit

Name: "Naw Ghay"
 Sex: Female
 Age: xx
 Ethnicity: Karen
 Occupation: Farmer
 Religion: Buddhist
 Marital Status: Married with 4 children
 Address: Kyauk Kyi township, Karen State
 Date of Interview: April 1999
 Source: FTUB

In January 1999, SPDC battalions IB 60 and LIB 351 from Kyauk Kyi started calling villages to repair their barracks and fences. Our village was ordered to cut down trees, and other villages were ordered to build fences for the battalions. Villagers had to work on that construction for almost twenty days in January.

In our region, there are units of army intelligence soldiers calling themselves *Sa Sa Sa*, guerrilla retaliation, or short pants soldiers. They have killed many people who were suspected of supporting the KNU, and they demand money, women and belongings. In the village shops, those soldiers take expensive clothing and other valuable things without giving money. People are very much afraid of them because they have killed about 50 people within the past four months.

The KNLA guerrillas have tried many times for a chance to ambush those troops. The latest attempt was in the end of February or maybe in March, when guerrillas ambushed a car which Shan Bpu, the notorious intelligence leader, had travelled in near Kyun Bin Seik village on the Kyauk Kyi-Mone road. The driver and a traveller in the front of the car were killed, but Shan Bpu, who was aware of his own security, had already got off along the way and escaped.

Most of the SPDC soldiers are afraid to travel on the Kyauk Kyi-Mone road unless they are fully equipped. As a result, starting in January 1999 the intelligence [*Sa Sa Sa*] soldiers ordered about 20 villages in Kyauk Kyi township to build a new road from Na Than Gwin to Mone, along the Sittaung river due west of the old Kyauk Kyi-Mone road. The Kyauk Kyi-Mone road has to pass through forest and hills, so the SPDC soldiers feel it is not safe to use. The Mone-Na Than Gwin road construction is under the control of the intelligence units led by Shan Bpu. The road is 15 feet wide, 24 feet wide at the base [*of the embankment*], and raised by 4.5 feet. It is at least twenty miles long. The work was divided and each family had to dig the earth and make a segment of road 54 feet long. Therefore villagers had to bring cattle, rakes, baskets, hoes etc. and work until their quota was finished. The villagers were even ordered to work at night in February, so the villagers brought lamps, batteries and fluorescent tubes to the work site and had to work nights. There were no materials supplied and there was no payment for the construction. The intelligence soldiers watched while villagers were working but they didn't beat anyone, because the work was by the quota system so if a family could work faster then they were allowed to go back earlier. Therefore entire families came to the work, so children, women and old people

around 50-60 years old could be seen on the work site.

In March the earth work was almost finished, except the bridges. For bridge construction, the intelligence soldiers confiscated wood, even small pieces, from houses and ordered villagers to build bridges. Some villagers had to cut down trees in the forest for bridge construction. Then each family was ordered to give 500 *Kyat* to buy materials for the construction. Moreover, each family had to send a person for three days for bridge construction. There were around ten bridges or maybe more. If a family could not work on bridge construction, they had to give 200 *Kyat* per day to hire a substitute person. The road construction crossed rice fields and farms but no compensation was given to owners of the land.

In March 1999, when the road construction was almost finished, the intelligence [*Sa Sa Sa*] soldiers of the SPDC Army ordered villages in Kyauk Kyi township to make fences around their villages. The villages were allowed to have only two gates. I don't know much about that work, because when it was starting my family decided to flee to Thailand and we left our village.

Interview: 18: Women Trafficking

Interview Date: May 9, 1999

During the first week of March in 1999, Ma Than (13), Ma Yi Win (14), Ma Hla Myint (26), Mi Nann Aung (13) and Naw The Mu (15) were taken by Commander Lt. Col. Kyaw Kyaw Win from LIB 284 to work at the Phaya Thonesu Town (Three Pagoda Town). They were told to pay 10,000 *kyat* per month for their job. They reached Phaya Thonesu on 28th March. The next day Lt. Col. Kyaw Kyaw Win brought them by a car to a restaurant named War Yon Taw at the Thai-Burma border to work. This restaurant is just a namesake given to a brothel run by MI 5, LIB 284, Burmese Immigration, Thai Immigration, Thai Police and Thai national Wunna Yai Yai (Big Boss). The owner of the restaurant is known as Wunna Yai Yai. These 5 girls were forced to work as the prostitute at this restaurant. From this War Yon Taw brothel house, only Ma Than (13) was able to escape on 29 March 1999, with the help of a young pro-democracy Burmese man. He helped her get back to her native land.

Ma Than told THRF her true story like this;

I was told by Daw San Mu from Moulmein, Aung Mingala Quarter that I can get a job at Phaya Thonesu Town at a rate of 10,000 *kyat* per month. I agreed to take that job as I was looking for a job in Moulmein for my family found difficulties in living. After that in the first week of March Lt. Col. Kyaw Kyaw Win came to take us. There were six young women in my group including me. The races are variety, Tovoyan, Mon, Karen and Burmese. We had to go to Paya Thonesu by car through Moulmein and Kyar-inn-seik-kyi. We got two days rest at Paya Thonesu. Then they sent us to War Yonetaw restaurant. We thought that we have to work as restaurant workers. But what we thought were all wrong when we get there. The restaurant is on the Thai side of Thai-Burma border with concrete floor, wooden walls and thatch roof. We found six other girls were already there. They were

of the same age as us and together with them we made twelve girls. The day I arrived there a Thai man took me. I had to go with him without knowing anything. Then at last my whole life was ruined and I soon understood the real meaning of War Yonetaw. We were new faces there so the customer gave 500 *baht* to 1,000 *baht* for us but we got only 10,000 *kyat* per month (30-40 *baht*/day). During the first month of work we did not get any day off except Sunday. We got permission on Sundays to go shopping. We had coffee in the morning two meals a day. Two months later, an elderly woman who came here before me said that our rate would be reduced to 200 *baht* or 300 *baht*. Every girl working here had their rate reduced at that time. Then after nine months we were to be expelled. All the girls working in War Yonetaw are girls aged between 13 to 17 years old. Two days after we reached the War Yonetaw, we were sent to Apho Gyi (old man), Burmese, we did not know his real name. Every new girl who came to War Yonetaw had to go to Apho Gyi for two days in turn.

As we were new, we had customers every night. There was no day off. The brothel got 15,000 *baht* to 30,000 *baht* per month for a girl make 500-10,000 *baht* per night. But the girl got 350-400 *baht* per month only.

There are all together twelve girls in War Yonetaw. Every girl has a sad story of her own about how she became a prostitute there. All their stories are pathetic. The girls are Tavoyan, Mon, Karen, Burmese and are from remote villages of Burma. They are very simple and honest. The SPDC army officials took advantage of this and sent them to this terrible life.

*Ma Than is not her real name.

(Source: *THR*)

Interview: 19: Extra-judicial killing, extortion

Name:	“Naw Paw Paw Htoo”
Sex:	Female
Age:	31
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Christian
Marital Status:	Widow with 4 children aged 1, 4, 6 and 8
Address:	Twa Ni Gone village, Mone township, Karen State
Date of Interview:	March 1999
Source:	KHRG

[“Naw Paw Paw Htoo” was living in Yan Myo Aung relocation site after being forced to move there. She fled into hiding after her husband was executed by a Sa Sa Sa death squad in November 1998. After a few months she found she wasn’t safe there either, and is now a refugee in Thailand.]

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: I arrived here on Saturday the 20th [of March 1999]. I left Yan Myo Aung on Thursday.

I came here with D— and my two nephews. If not for D— I couldn't have come, because I have never come here before.

Q: How is life in Yan Myo Aung?

A: Some people are really very poor. People who have fields have better lives. I had nothing. My husband died three months ago. His name in the registration, the name his parents gave him, was Saw Mah Htoo but his cousins and nephews called him Gah Gyi [*'goose'*] because he had long legs and hands and he was tall and thin. He was 37 years old. I couldn't stay there any longer and came here.

Q: How did he die?

A: The Burmese captured and killed him. That was in November, but I don't remember the date. The one who captured him, Shan Bpu [*a Dam Byan Byaut Kya section commander*], came to Yan Myo Aung at about 6 a.m., called him down [*out of their house*], tied him up and forced him to follow them. When they came and captured my husband, we were all in the house: my mother, my children and me. When they called him to go with them, I told my husband, "Don't be afraid, pray to God." Then Shan Bpu took his knife and held it to my throat telling me not to speak. He said, "Don't say anything! Don't open your mouth! Or you will die!" I was afraid and couldn't speak. At first only two Burmese came for my husband, but later Bo Maung Maung [*another Dam Byan Byaut Kya commander*] arrived and tied my husband's hands behind his back and covered his face with one of his old sarongs. They took a guitar string and tied it around his neck. That's when they saw our guitar hanging on the wall. Shan Bpu said he wanted my guitar, bag and trousers that he saw on my wall so I should give them to him. They didn't say anything after that and they killed him that evening. They pulled him from place to place and then killed him at Teh Su while we were still in Yan Myo Aung.

Q: Why did they kill him?

A: How could I know?

Q: How did they kill him?

A: I think they hit him but we didn't see it. I went and told the village headmen but they told me that they wouldn't go. The village headmen wouldn't go to rescue him for us.

Q: Did they come and ask you any questions after they killed your husband?

A: They didn't interrogate me, but they came back and asked for the bag and the guitar that they'd seen when they came and took my husband. The village headman called me and said, "Do you still have your guitar, trousers and bag? Give them to me and I'll take them to the soldiers, because he came and told me to get them from you." I told him, "I sold my guitar, trousers and bag to buy rice so I don't own them anymore." People were worried that he would make trouble for me or kill me when he saw me, so I hid myself and then fled and came here. Only my family knows that I've come here.

Q: Did your husband ever help Kawthoolei [*KNU/KNLA*]?

A: In the distant past when he was single, he used to help them as a guide. After he got

married he never did that again, but when the KNLA came to our area he treated them as friends because he knew them.

Q: How many people have they killed recently?

A: In Yan Myo Aung they killed my husband and K'Ser Ko, but they have also killed people from many other villages, such as Meh Tha Lay, Lu Ah, Weh Gyi, Haw Ko Ghaw and Twa Ni Gone [villages]. They killed three people from Meh Tha Lay, and five people from Twa Ni Gone including my husband. The other four people [from Twa Ni Gone], Saw Lay Heh, Saw Gka Bweh, Saw Maw Nyunt Po and Saw Po Shaw, were all killed at the same time before my husband. My husband, Saw Aye and K'Ser Ko were killed in the same month. Saw Aye and K'Ser Ko [K'Ser Ko ('mountaintop') is a nickname; his other name was Po Theh Pyay] were killed at the same time and place [November 18 at the Oo Yay river], and then their heads were hung up by the road. I don't know why they killed them. Now their heads have been thrown away already.

Q: What is Shan Bpu doing now?

A: He's killing anyone he wants to kill. He'd slap your face if he saw you on the path. He doesn't care about anyone. Now he's gone to stay in Thit Cha Seik. His wife lives in Lu Ah. He doesn't go to [Yan Myo Aung] very often but he does go to Lu Ah, Weh Gyi, Thit Cha Seik and Ter Bpaw.

Q: Did he force any villagers to relocate?

A: When we were in Yan Myo Aung, Bo Maung Maung came and told us, "In this area, if I don't allow you to live here, you can't live here. If I allow you to stay you can stay, so cut down the trees and plants in the village so it looks clear." Anytime he comes to the village he demands clothing, sarongs and food. When we see a taxi arriving with Shan Bpu inside it, everyone prays and no one feels like eating. He forces taxi drivers to take him wherever he wants to go, and he never pays them. When he came, all the villagers didn't dare move. Some hid in their rooms and others went to hide in their toilets.

Q: Do the villagers enjoy living there?

A: No one likes to live there but they can't do anything about it so they just have to suffer. Who would want to live in a place where you have to give fees and taxes until you can't afford to buy food? We were forced to give things all the time. They demanded money, sarongs, bags, clothes and Karen traditional clothing. People either wove them or bought them for him [Shan Bpu]. I don't know what he's going to do with them, but I think he's going to wear them.

Q: Can you tell me how you feel in your heart?

A: The sadness I suffer from is so deep I can't describe it. It's like I'm in the dark. When they first captured my husband I couldn't eat for two days but still my stomach felt full. I prayed all day and night. We also had the problem of not having any rice at that time so I had to find rice. I have many children and had to find food for them before every meal. My children didn't know what was happening, they were playing and laughing innocently. My children are all boys except the youngest. The day that my husband was taken, I carried my

youngest child and went to the village headman for help. I didn't care if the older children had food or not. I went to the first Karen village headman and he told me that he couldn't help. I went to another Karen village headman and he told me he couldn't help because Bo Maung Maung told him that the ones he captured couldn't be rescued. I went to a Burmese village headman and he shouted, "Bo Maung Maung came and asked me if there was anyone in Yan Myo Aung named Gah Gyi and I told him that I don't know a Gah Gyi in Yan Myo Aung but I know a Gah Gyi in Twa Ni Gone." See! The Burmese village headman was asked about us and he should have told us so but he didn't, so we went on living as people who have nothing to fear. Moreover, he didn't help us when I went for his help, he simply shouted, "He just called him, so! He will release him later." I thought that they were going to release him but they didn't and they killed him. When Bo Maung Maung came and tied up my husband, I was going to go to the village headman but he stopped me and asked me where I was going. I told him that I would go to my uncle but he said, "Don't go anywhere." Then he put me in a house and told me not to leave. I knew he was worried about me telling someone.

Q: Do you think they will kill everyone who's in contact with the KNLA?

A: They will kill anyone who's in contact with the KNLA and they are really doing it. We didn't have contact with the KNLA and we are not well known names. The Burmese soldiers had never asked about us before, so how could we have known that they were going to come and kill us? They held a meeting in our village one time, the same morning that they captured my husband. He [*Shan Bpu*] said that we mustn't contact people on this side [*KNLA*]. He said, "If you want to contact them, leave with your whole family. If you don't go, the day that you contact them will be the day you die." They have killed many, but we don't know every one. They have also killed people in Nyaung Dang and Kler Ko.

Q: Do they still plan to kill people?

A: They are still planning to kill. Their mouths are always saying that they will kill people. Shan Bpu said, "I will rape the Karen women and kill the Karen men." He forced a girl from Lu Ah, Naw O—, to marry him but he hit and punched her after they married. Then even though he had a wife he came to Twa Ni Gone to marry another girl, but she was studying in town so he couldn't find her in the village. Her name is Naw L— and her mother's name is Naw M—. He came with pigs and asked people about her but people told him that there is no one named Naw L—, so he forced people to buy the pigs which he had pulled all the way from Weh Tu.

In Shan Bpu's section, all the soldiers are stupid and impudent because all of them are NCO's [*Non-Commissioned Officers*]. When each of them got married, the villagers had to give them money for gifts and money for pigs. When they gave the invitation to the village headman, it had written on it how much money each village had to give and it also said that everyone must go to the wedding and bring money as a gift. It said those who didn't go must still give 500 *Kyat* as a forced gift. The villagers had to bring wood and build a house with a fence around the garden for each of them after they got married. They got married one by one and the villagers had to do that each time but they didn't dare to say anything. They all married Burmese women from Ah Nya Su except Shan Bpu, who married a Karen woman.

Q: Did you ever have to work for them?

A: I didn't go but many people had to go to build their houses. They have to live in nicer houses than ours. A few days after my husband died, the [SPDC] village headman told me to go and do *loh ah pay* ['voluntary' labour] for the SPDC soldiers. I told him that I couldn't go because my children are too young. Then he told me to do sentry duty but I didn't go. The village headman came and demanded I give porter fees but I told him I had nothing to give. When I was living with my husband I tried hard to pay all the fees, just as the village headman had told us to do in the meeting, even though it left us with no chance to eat. The headman said, "Even if your water bucket has a hole in it, we don't care. What's important is that you bring us water." We tried to pay the fees and go for *loh ah pay* and sentry duty, but after my husband died I didn't do anything for them because I was busy with my small children. I had to sell my house to buy rice and then we went to live and eat in my sister's house in Yan Myo Aung. Sometimes I went to my other sister's house in Thit Cha Seik because the Burmese asked about me often. Sometimes I lived in my sister L—'s house, sometimes in my sister M—'s house and sometimes with my brother in D—.

Q: Weren't your siblings worried while you were living in their houses?

A: They worried about me so they sent me here. They were worried that the Burmese would get me and eat me. I told them, "It doesn't matter if I die, it would be good for me. I would like to die because I'm thinking about things too much." I told them not to worry about me but they worried and found a way for me to come here. I didn't know how to come because I've never travelled.

Interview: 20: Forced relocation, forced labour, education and health in relocation camp

Name: "Say Mya"
Sex: Female
Age: 21
Ethnicity: Karen
Religion: Christian
Marital Status: Single
Address: Thirida. Went to school in Haw Gka Tah.
Date of Interview: March 1999
Source: KHRG

Q: Did your mother come here with you?

A: My mother is very old, over 60 years old. She couldn't come so she stayed behind with my sister in Daw Saw Leh. I don't have a father. I have five siblings who are all older than I am, I am the youngest. We came here with 4 other families. The total number of people we came together with is over 20.

Q: Did the soldiers know you were coming here?

A: They didn't know. We moved during the night, we didn't dare come during the day.

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: We were living in Thirida but I studied in Haw Gka Ta school and only finished grade 4. Haw Gka Tah is in the western part of the state while Thirida is in the east, they are very far apart. I lived in Thirida from when I was very young until I was 6 years old. I then went to study with a Karen teacher who came to our village and took pity on us because we didn't know the Karen or Burmese languages. She took us to her village and taught us the languages and sent us to school. I was there for three years and then I returned to Thirida to live. We were then forced to relocate to Nwa La Bo and stayed there for three years.

Q: Why did you go to live in Nwa La Bo?

A: The Burmese forced us to go there in 1996. I was 18 years old at the time. Nwa La Bo was never a village, it is only a relocation site. They sent a letter to the village headman demanding that we leave. They said, "You are not allowed to stay here anymore. All you Kayah people must go." I don't know how many villages they forced to go there. There were over 1,000 houses in Thirida [*her brother-in-law later points out that this is not the case and in fact there were only about 100 houses in Thirida*] but not all of those people went to Nwa La Bo. About twenty-five families went to Nwa La Bo, some went to find their relatives in Daw Dta Hay and some went to Shadaw.

Q: Did they feed you when you relocated to Nwa La Bo?

A: They gave us two bowls [*about 4 kg / 8.8 lb*] of rice per person per month for the first three months. They only gave us rice, nothing else. However, later, they didn't give us any so we had no food to eat. At that time, it was only my mother, myself and my elder sister who was still single.

Q: How did you get food while you were there?

A: They didn't allow us to leave so we couldn't go to our old village, which was too far away anyway. We couldn't even rent a field. We had to stay in the house and if they had given us food we could have eaten it but they didn't give us anything after the first three months. When we finished the rice they gave us, we sold what we had to buy more food to eat. However, now we have nothing. We couldn't do anything so we didn't want to stay there any longer. We came here because we needed to get out of there.

Q: Did you have to work for the Army?

A: Battalion 250 forced us to plant seedlings in a monastery garden on a hill. It could have been rubber but I don't know. Their army camp is just below our village, Nwa La Bo, on the plain. One person from each house had to go every day every week. They never gave us anything to eat while we were working, we had to bring food from home. If we didn't have food at home, we didn't eat. They didn't pay us for working for them either. They also forced us to carry stones to build a road from beside the village to Peh Kong [*the Burmese name; it is Pleh Kue in Kayah*]. I think the road will go up to Yan Gong but I'm not sure because I didn't go there. We went to work on the road at 8 a.m., sometimes 9 a.m, and then returned in the evening at 4 p.m. We had to take our own food, they didn't give us any, and we were only given ten minutes to eat lunch. We had to work very quickly.

Q: When you were working on the road, did you see the soldiers beat anyone?

A: If you don't work hard and do your best, they beat you. I saw them beat my friends. I don't know their names, we didn't know each other very well. They were from other villages and had come to live with us when we were all forced to relocate. The soldiers said to them, "Do it nicely." My friends said, "We have never done it before so how can we do it nicely?" Then he beat them. My friends were women about the same size as I am. He beat them with a stick wider than my big toe. He hit them too many times for me to count. Some of them were crying.

Q: When you were in Nwa La Bo, did you have to carry things for the soldiers?

A: No. Men went to do that but I couldn't go so I had to go and do Loh Ah Pay. My brother-in-law had to carry things for them but I can't remember how many times.

Q: How many houses were there in Nwa La Bo in 1996, when you relocated there?

A: There were over eighty houses, including our village and other villages who relocated there. Now I don't know how many houses there are because I didn't count. Quite a few people have left Nwa La Bo.

Q: Is there a school in Nwa La Bo?

A: No. The children cannot study. If we wanted to study we had to go stay with our relatives in other villages such as Tay Tama [*a.k.a. Htee Gkeh*] which is quite a long way from Nwa La Bo. Tay Tama is beside Loikaw.

Q: Is there a hospital in Nwa La Bo?

A: No. If we were ill we had to go to Loikaw. There was a problem in going there. There were patrols in the area and they would interrogate us so we were afraid of them.

Q: Which way did you come here?

A: I came through the forest and didn't know the way. My elder siblings used to walk in the forest so I came with them. It took us eight days to come here and we brought rice to eat from our village but it was only enough for seven days, so one day we had no rice and ate nothing. There were no villages on the way so we couldn't find food. We were tired but we kept going because we wanted to arrive. We arrived here on January 16 [1999] with about thirty other people and have been here for about two months.

Q: When you were coming here, did you see Kayah people in the jungle?

A: We saw many people on the way. I saw a grandmother beside Nwa La Bo who couldn't walk and had to have people carry her. When she was able to walk a little, another woman couldn't walk and had to be carried. There were many women who had to be carried because of illness or fatigue.

Q: Do you want to say anything else?

A: When we were in Nwa La Bo we had no food to eat and were deeply worried, but we can't describe that. People who are clever can describe that to other people but people like us aren't so clever so we can't. I would really like to study but I think I am too old to go to

school and my mother can't afford to pay for it. My mother told me that I couldn't go to school because she can't afford to send me. I cried. I would really like to go to school but we have no money. No one in my family can go to school. I had to stop going to school to do forced labour.

Q: Do you want to go back to your village again?

A: I don't want to go back because the situation is not good. I will go back to Thirida if there is peace in Burma. There are no longer any houses in Thirida because they have all been burned. I have only been here a short time, so I don't know if I like it here yet.

Interview: 21: Forced relocation, forced labour, poor education, extortion, soldiers forcing children to marry, rape, arrest, torture

Name: "Nyi Reh"
Sex: Male
Age: 28
Ethnicity: Karenni
Occupation: Farmer/Buffalo herder
Marital Status: Single. 4 siblings, he's the youngest, the eldest is 35.
Address: Daw Dta Hay
Date of Interview: March 1999
Source: KHRG

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: January 16 [1999]. My parents didn't come with me, they are still in Daw Dta Hay. I didn't tell them or write to them about my coming here because I can't read or write, but they know I'm here. A person who came here two weeks after I did said that my mother believed I had come here. They wanted to come as well but they couldn't walk the long distance. I came alone but have a sister here. 408 people arrived when I did, some of them are from Nwa La Bo, some are from Shadaw, some are from Bpa Law, which is near the Pon River, and some are from other villages. Some people were living in the forest but they came from Shadaw.

Q: Is Daw Dta Hay a relocation site?

A: People from Thirida, Daw Tanaw and other villages were forced to leave their mountain villages and go there. I am from Daw Dta Hay originally. There are about 120 households in Daw Dta Hay. I don't know what villages all the people in Daw Dta Hay are from.

Q: Why did you come here?

A: Because they forced us to work. Other people want to come here as well but they can't; they can't even leave the village. They forced us to cut trees for them to sell. They forced us to fetch two big tins of water and take them to their camp eight times a day. One person was forced to do that eight times a day and if you couldn't, they either put you in the stocks for twenty-four hours, fined you 2,000 *kyat*, or you could give them five *viss* [8 kg or 17.5 lb.] of meat such as pork or beef. People who had ox-carts could use them to fetch water

but those who didn't have them had to carry it themselves. They used all that water for drinking, washing and bathing. Now there's not enough water in the village.

Q: What problems did you encounter along the way?

A: There were many problems but we had to come. There were people near farms along the way [*to the border with Thailand*], some of whom have no rice or food. The farmers also complain that they don't have enough rice because the army takes half the paddy from their farms.

Q: Did they force you to work while you were in Daw Dta Hay?

A: We had to do forced labour in the village and on the hill. There is an army training camp there called Sa Gka Khun [*abbreviation for 'Column 7'*]. Soldiers from Battalions 43, 261, 250 and 102 came for the training. There were 30 to 50 soldiers from each battalion and they came from places like Dee Maw So, Pleh Ku, Hsi Hsaing and other places. Their commander and head trainer is Major Kyi Hlaing and he is from Pleh Ku. There are many officers staying there: Major Myeh Kyeh, Bo Win Myint and Bo Ne Win. The captains who came are Captains Aung Saung and Thay Htoo. Thay Htoo is Karen and is from Hsi Hsaing. There are also instructors, namely: Than Naing Oo, Moe Zaw Oo, Maw Way, Thant Oo, Kyaw Shwe, Chit Ko Ko and others. They had a training exercise there for soldiers ages 14 to 30 that they called 'Column 7 Training Exercise'. There are over 100 soldiers. The soldiers are from many villages, such as Bay Yay, Hsi Hsaing and Dee Maw So. They are from all battalions including 250 and 261 and they went there for the training exercise. They said they would force us to do the exercise also, but they didn't and we didn't know when they were going to. They forced villagers to kill pigs for them [*for an opening celebration banquet*] and only gave them about one third of the cost. The villagers still have to give chickens and they are demanding beef twice a week. Some villagers still have to give them rice and if it's the big commander, they have to give their best quality rice. Many people can't work on their farms and produce food because the army forces each family to do five acres of rubber plantation. The plantation is beside their army camp. The people are cutting and clearing the area but the rubber seedlings haven't come yet. The army is forcing people to prepare the area before the seedlings arrive. People also have to do clearing and do plantations of things like peanuts and other kinds of beans for the army. Also, if cattle go near their camp, they take them into their camp garden area and then the owners must give them 5,000 *kyat* to get their cattle back. Moreover, if the cattle trample ten big tins worth of peanuts, they charge the owner the cost of 15 big tins of peanuts. If nobody comes to get the cattle, they shoot them.

Q: What sort of Loh Ah Pay do people have to do for the army?

A: For the road construction, they forced people who own ox-carts to carry stones, three trips each day. Those who don't have ox-carts have to lay the stones on the road. People have to stand up while they are working. If they sit down, the soldiers beat them with bamboo as big as my forearm [*about 5 cm in diameter*]. I saw them beat E—, R— and a few other people. They were sitting down so the soldiers beat them and said, "Don't you see what those other people are doing?" People can't even sit and rest. I only saw a few people who were beaten because I had to go and dig out the stones and bring them to the road on carts.

Q: Do they give rice to the labourers?

A: People who go for Loh Ah Pay have to take their own rice and water, they don't provide either. People have to go at 8 a.m. and then they can return at 4 or 5 p.m. We had to work very hard without taking a rest. We were forced to go for Loh Ah Pay two days per week, every week.

Q: Do the villagers have fields?

A: There are 120 houses in Daw Dta Hay and twenty houses have fields. The villagers can work their fields but the army takes half of their rice.

Q: Have you ever gone to school?

A: No, I have never gone to school. Daw Dta Hay only has a primary school. I had to take care of the buffaloes and then work on the farm. However, now we can't work on the farm because we always have to work for the soldiers. The soldiers force us to get a pass from them which costs 50 *kyat* and is for one day. A pass for a week costs 150 *kyat*. One week is the maximum they allow. If you don't come back on time, they put you in the stocks for a week.

Q: Do they ever demand money from the villagers?

A: They demand money often. They forced a boat owner to go and buy some things for them and when he returned a little bit late, they fined him 2,000 *kyat*. People have to buy them things from Loikaw or Leh Lwin town [*Leh Lwin is Burmese, in Kayah it's Leh Lwin Lin*]. They demanded he be back by 7 o'clock and he arrived at 8 o'clock. It was his boat, they forced him to go without paying him and when he was a little late they fined him. The soldiers have a car but they don't use it and say they don't have petrol or a battery and then force the villagers to do things. When they sell charcoal, they force the villagers to go to Leh Lwin Lin and sell it for them but don't pay them anything.

Q: Have many people from Daw Dta Hay come here?

A: I don't know. I know that only a few people came because people couldn't get out. I fled with S— who is 24 years old. We fled together when they forced us to cut trees for them. We came by way of the Shan border. I started heading here on January 3 [1999] and arrived here on January 16.

Q: What did you eat on the way here?

A: There were Shan farms on the way and if we arrived at a farm in the morning the farmer gave us food. We spoke to each other in Burmese and I asked them if they wanted to come here with us but they didn't dare. The Shan farmers work and live on their farms, there are no old villages in the area anymore. In the evening we didn't eat anything.

Q: Do you want to say anything else?

A: In October of 1997 they captured 6 Kayah people, between the ages of 30 and 40 years old, in Daw Dta Hay and put them in jail for 3 years. Their names are Seh Reh, Gee Reh, Pah Reh, Ee Reh, Soe Reh and Soe Reh. There were two Soe Rehs. They put them in the jail in Loikaw, the only jail in the area. The soldiers arrested and jailed them because they

didn't go for Loh Ah Pay when the village headman called them to go. I saw them go. I don't know exactly why they arrested and put them in jail. They were people who were from Daw Dta Hay originally and could speak Burmese. Soldiers from Battalion 54 beat them and electrocuted them while interrogating them. Their brains aren't normal anymore and they have oedema. Battalion 54 has left and gone to other places, now soldiers from Pleh Kue and other areas are stationed there.

Q: What other abuses have you seen?

A: They like to marry women who are very young. One soldier wanted to take a 12 year old Kayah girl named C— as his wife. People told them the girl is too young and not to take her but their commander forced the people to give her to his soldier. The girl had to agree even though she didn't want to. Another girl, L—, was studying in grade 8 and had to stop studying [*to marry a soldier*]. She was 14 years old. An 18 year old girl named H— also had to marry a soldier. They didn't want to marry the soldiers but the commander said they must marry his soldiers so they had to do it. That was last year. One of the girls is close to having a child. Their parents aren't very happy about this.

Q: Anything else?

A: An instructor, Sergeant Kyaw Shway, raped a Kayah woman who had a husband and 2 children. That happened in July of 1998. Kyaw Shway has a wife but she isn't with him in the relocation site so he raped her. When many people were talking about it, his commander asked him and he denied it saying it wasn't true and that the Kayah villagers were spreading rumours. Finally, they called the Kayah woman and she said it was true. She said, "When my husband was not at home, he came and raped me." Kyaw Shway fled to Yan Gone [*Rangoon*].

Q: Is there a hospital in Daw Dta Hay?

A: No, there's no hospital but there's a clinic at Goe Nah, a Shan village. There are two villages there, a Kayah village above a Shan village. We call them Daw Kloh Ku and Goe Nah Glo Ku. There is a middle school in Daw Kloh Ku. There is a primary school in Daw Dta Hay.

Q: Do you have to pay when you go to the clinic in Goe Nah?

A: If we go to the clinic between Thursday and Saturday we have to pay. If we go between Monday and Wednesday they are open, so we don't have to pay.

Interview: 22: Forced Labor, Livelihood

Name:	"Mi Sein Ngwe"
Sex:	Female
Age:	46
Ethnicity:	Mon
Religion:	Buddhist
Occupation:	Farmer
Marital Status:	Not Stated

Address: Paukpingwin village, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division
Date of Interview: May 4, 1999
Place of Interview: A Mon village under the protection of NMSP
Source: HURFOM

Q: When did you arrive here? Are you alone or with your family or with your relatives?

A: I arrived here about ten days ago with my family. When we fled from our village, we were altogether ten families and forty-five people. We came here together. Some are my relatives and some are not.

Q: Why did you flee from your village?

A: We fled to escape the mis-treatment of Burmese soldiers (SPDC troops), because they used us to build a railway and motor road.

Q: When did the Burmese soldiers force you to work on these construction projects?

A: Before January (1999), we were forced to rebuild Ye-Tavoy railway for nearly three months, After working for railway construction, we were informed by our village headmen that we had to work on Ye-Tavoy motor road again.

Q: How did the village headmen managed to get villagers to work in the railway and what type of work did you have to do in the railway construction?

A: Our village had about three hundred households and whenever the headmen told us to work on the railway construction, about one hundred villagers from one hundred households went and worked on the construction. In the railway construction, we were instructed to rebuild the embankment that had collapsed during the last rainy season. At the construction site, we collected stones and filled them in the many holes of the embankment, and crushed stones into small pieces and laid them on the surface of embankment. In some places, we dug earth and filled it in many holes in the embankment to regain the proper embankment again. Then, we found grass nearby and planted it beside the embankment to protect the embankment from eroion.

Q: Did some villagers from your village die because of this construction?

A: I remember one man who died after returning from the construction site. His Name was Pha lay, he was about 17 years old. After he returned home from construction site, he became seriously sick. At the construction site, the weather conditions are very terrible.. In the daytime, when we were working at the “Malawe-taung” construction site, the sun was so hot, and at night, it was too cold. Even in the night the soldiers forced us to work, and then when we had the chance to sleep, we could not sleep very well because of the cold. Many villagers got sick at the work site and at their homes after their return. So, the young man, Pha Lay, got a high fever when he arrived home and his parents were too poor to send him to the hospital in town and could only treat him with herbal medicines in the village. But he died.

Q: Can you tell about your experience in the motor road construction?

A: Everytime, about fifty villagers from our village were conscripted to work in the

construction. Our family had to work four times, before I left home. My husband worked two times, myself and my son (about 12 years old) worked another two times. We were brought by the village headmen to the “Malawe-taung” and “14-mile” construction sites. In the construction site, we worked together with soldiers from LIB 408. One column of soldiers, consisting of about four men, and a hundred villagers worked together. According to the news from the soldiers, they received 300 *Kyat* per day for their labour and the commanders would give this to them monthly.

Q: What type of work did you have to do in the construction?

A: The four different times my husband and I worked, we did four different types of work. First, when I worked, the soldiers instructed us to clear about three feet of land from both sides of the former motor road. We cleared grass and small trees, moved out all the big stones and dug deep water canals, two feet wide and 1 foot deep, on both sides of the road. The second time, when my husband went and worked, he was instructed to gather stones from near the work site in the forest and streams. The soldiers guarded them as they did this work, and conscripted some oxen-carts from the nearest villages to carry the stones. Then, the villagers were forced to crush the stones near the work-site to get many ‘kyins’ of stones. The third time, when my husband went and worked again, the villagers were instructed to lay small stones on the widened track. The last time, when I went to the work-site, we were instructed to clear the small trees and bushes from beside the road, fifty feet on each side.

Q: How many days did you work at the construction site each time?

A: When we went to the work-sites, we were not told exactly by the headmen how many days we would be forced to work in the construction. Depending on the sharing of work-duties, and how heavy the burden of the work, we stayed and worked at the work-sites from 5 days to two weeks.

Q: Did the soldiers beat the villagers, or how were the conditions at the work-site?

A: I did not see the soldiers beat the villagers. But the punishment was to do a somersault. If a sergeant saw a villager taking a rest under a shady tree, he would punish the man by ordering him to do a somersault for fifteen times on the ground. If you don’t attempt to flee, it’s no problem. If you flee, the soldiers will shoot you. We had to work regardless of the heat or cold.

Q: While you were working in the construction, did you meet other villagers?

A: When I went to the work-sites, I always met many villagers working like us. They are divided into many groups. One group has about 15- 20 villagers. They were from many villages, such as Aleskan, Kyaukadin, Kywethalin and Yapu.

Q: If you couldn’t go to the work-site, how did you manage for a substitute?

A: If we couldn’t go to work-site, we would have to pay 500 *kyat* to village headman for one day of labour. If the work lasted for ten days we would have to pay 5,000 *kyat*. Nobody could pay except about ten rich families in our village. We never paid the fee or hired a substitute. When we were ordered to work the last time, my husband was sick and could not

go, so me and my son went to work.

Q: Do you expect to go back to your village soon?

A: We are a poor family in the village and while we were in village, my husband was a day-labourer. We owned only one house and two oxen. We received some paddy from hiring the two oxen, and the income from my husband allowed us to survive in the village. At the end, when my husband was seriously sick because of the hardship in the construction site, I went to the work-site. Then I had to work, in his stead, in a beetle-nut plantation for our family's income. Then we heard about another conscription of free laborers, so we decided to flee. For nearly six years, our village has been constantly forced to work in various construction projects and if we go back now, we will be subjected to harsh work again. I will stay here a long time, because here we can escape the construction work.

Interview: 23: Extortion, Forced labor

Name:	"Saw Po Thu"
Sex:	Male
Age:	36
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital Status:	Married with 4 children aged 2-10
Address:	Thaton township
Date of Interview:	May 1999
Place of Interview:	near his village
Source:	KHRG

Q: Have the SPDC soldiers ever come to your village?

A: Yes, the Burmese soldiers came to the village. They just came to the village last night. They came to sleep in xxxx village on the May 3. They came to collect 2,000 pieces of thatch and 1,000 bamboo [*each piece of thatch is several feet long, consisting of jungle leaves tied onto a frame of split bamboo; the 1,000 bamboo are long bamboo posts*]. They came in the evening and visited the village chairman. The village chairman came to tell me. We can get bamboo in our village, but there are no *ta la aw* leaves for thatch in our village, so they forced us to give them money instead of thatch. We collected 70 *kyat* and 5 bamboo from each household for them. They said the Brigadier had ordered them to collect it. We don't know what it is for, they took it to their camp. Some villagers have no money, but they still had to give because they are afraid of the Burmese. If the villagers didn't give it, the village head would have difficulties with the Burmese, so the villagers try to help the headman. Villagers here are afraid. If we don't give they will do something, because our village is not far from town. So we don't dare stay here without helping them.

Q: Where did these Burmese soldiers come from?

A: Usually only the senior village leaders go to the camp. Those who have gone to their camp told us that the Burmese have Battalion bases in Kyone Doh and Kawkareik. But

these Burmese said they came from N—.

Q: Did you already give them the money and bamboo?

A: Now we are still collecting the money and bamboo, but in the next two or three days we will finish collecting it. Then we must give it to them. The village heads don't dare take any for themselves. If you are village headman for the Burmese [*i.e. the SPDC-appointed Village Peace & Development Council Chairman*], you have to follow and obey them. When you don't, they accuse you of helping Karen soldiers, and then if one or two [*KNLA*] people go and shoot at them they make problems for the village. They say that we didn't inform them that *KNLA* people were staying in our village. They come and stay in our village many days and shoot and eat our chickens and pigs, then when they leave the village they shoot and kill all the livestock they see along their way.

Q: Do they ever do that?

A: If their commander is good, the soldiers will also be good. If their commander is not good then you'll know about it. If they can't take things from a house, they'll make problems for the house owner. They ask rice from the villagers. They know that villagers keep rice in their houses, and if the villagers say they have no rice then they won't believe it. They shoot and eat our poultry, and we can't tell them not to. They don't pay us any *kyat* for that.

Q: Do they ever ask for *loh ah pay*?

A: Yes, they force us to go for *loh ah pay* to build the motor road and their camp, to dig trenches and fence their camp. They also force us to go portering. Right now they've demanded 6 people. They got 5 people, and they collected money for the one they didn't get.

Interview: 24: Relocation camp, forced labour, restriction of movement, extortion, rice quota

Name:	“Saw Lah Thaw”
Sex:	Male
Age:	xxx
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Address:	Yan Myo Aung relocation site, Mone township
Date of Interview:	May 1999
Source:	KHRG

[“Saw Lah Thaw” was interviewed shortly after arriving in Thailand as a refugee.]

Q: How many villages are in Yan Myo Aung relocation site?

A: There are many villages in Yan Myo Aung: Noh Htaw Hta, Bpa Reh Si, Ta Maw Ma, Twa Ni Gone, Ter Bpaw and Myeh Yeh. There are also five villages in Thit Cha Seik: Tha Htay Gone, Nga Law Der, Ter Bpaw, Po Thaug Su, Oo Chit Kin, and Thit Cha Seik itself. Not all of the villagers have gone to those places though. Some Myeh Yeh villagers have gone to Leh Pa, some to Ler Doh and some are still around Myeh Yeh. They've forced Lu

Ah to relocate two times. The first time they forced them to live in a place between Haw Ko Ghaw and Meik Tha Lin. Then they forced them to go back to their old village. Then another group of troops came and forced them to go to the relocation site again. After that the Short Pants group [*Sa Thon Lon*] came and forced them to go back but they don't allow them to stay in the village anymore, they force them to live in a place nearby. Baw Bpee Der had to relocate too. All the villages around Baw Bpee Der, like Kyaut Bu Daung, Myau Oo and all the others there had to move. They had to relocate to a new section of Mone town.

Q: What about Nyaung Bin Seik [*a village in northern Mone township*]?

A: In Nyaung Bin Seik people were having a festival in honour of a dead monk, and there was a stage show. While one performer was dancing and singing, people were going up to give her presents. Shan Bpu [*of the Sa Thon Lon*] also went to give her a present, but he acted like he would grab her so her friends got angry and jumped up to protect her from him. He got angry too and said, "I was giving her a present with good intentions, but you've made a scene". Then he went and fired shells among the crowd and the performers.

Q: Does Shan Bpu take good care of his new Karen wife?

A: It seems like he's taking care of her, because whenever he's staying in a place 2 hours' walk away from the place where his wife is staying he forces people to go and bring his wife to him. He burned his parents-in-law's house because he was forcing everyone in Lu Ah [*village*] to dismantle their houses and take them to the relocation site. Some houses are very big so people can't dismantle them and carry them away in just one or two days, so he burned his parents-in-law's house [*they live in Lu Ah*]. Then they got very angry with him, and his brother-in-law became very angry with him. His brother-in-law went up into a house and Shan Bpu asked him, "Why are you going in the house?" He answered, "I'm going to get a knife to cut you with because you burned our house. Houses don't cost just one or two *Kyat* you know, and we aren't machines who can build a house in just one or two days! We can't take it when you treat us like this!" Other people took the knife away from him so he couldn't cut Shan Bpu, but if they hadn't taken it he really would have.

Q: Where are the Lu Ah villagers staying now?

A: They won't let them stay in the village, they are keeping them in a field between Lu Ah and Weh Gyi. They just abuse the population. People have their village nearby but they aren't allowed to live in it, instead they have to live in a field where there is no shade and build tiny huts to live in. People who've been forced to relocate have to live like wild chickens. They have no place to work, so they must get a pass to go back and work in their old villages. One pass only lasts for three days. People aren't allowed to go to the forest to graze their cattle or to find food for themselves.

Q: When you left, which villages were being forced to cut down their trees?

A: Noh Htaw Hta, Bpa Reh Si, Twa Ni Gone, Ta Maw Ma, Ter Bpaw and Myeh Yeh. Twa Ni Gone was just forced to cut them down in April [*1999*]. They forced people to cut down all the trees – the mango trees, coconut palms and every tree that our ancestors had planted so that we could eat the fruit. The Short Pants group forced the villagers to cut them

down. They had one power saw, and some people had to cut them with handsaws. In Myeh Yeh they cut them once but not all the trees were cut down, so they had to go back and cut them again. At first the villagers from Noh Hta Hta didn't go back to cut their own trees, so the soldiers forced Burman villagers from Leh Pa to go and cut those trees. After they were forced to cut them the Burman villagers went to the Karen villagers and said, "Each fruit tree that people have planted, they had to give it attention and good care so it would grow to bear fruit, so we were ashamed when they forced us to cut them down. If we were so ashamed ourselves, then how much worse must the owners of those trees feel? If the soldiers didn't go with us we wouldn't have cut them, but the soldiers came and watched us with guns when we went to cut the trees by their order."

Q: What is their objective?

A: We can't understand their aim. We don't know what they'll do next. They burned all the farmfield huts in the hot season and forced everyone to go back and live in the middle of their villages. Now they are patrolling around there and abusing people. They forced us to build a road. They force everyone to work on whatever they want them to do, and they also force us to give so many taxes. We have to do 'volunteer labour' constantly, and they also force us to go as porters, so how can you have time to work for your own living? They forced us to work on the road and they forced us to cut the forest. We had to cut down all the forest where people used to let their buffaloes graze for food. They forced us to cut it completely clear. It took us the whole month to cut it down, and then they forced us to dig out the stumps. We also had to do sentry duty once every three days. When it's your turn for sentry duty but you're already doing other 'volunteer labour' so you arrive a bit late, they beat you as though they're going to kill you. They often beat people on sentry duty.

Q: What do the Short Pants soldiers say to people?

A: They said that if the resistance [*KNLA*] comes then people should tell them, and that if people don't inform them and then they find out about it later they will kill people. They said that battles must not occur, that if a battle occurs near any village they will burn that village and kill the villagers or force them to relocate. They also forced us to work for them constantly, so we didn't have any time to do our own work. Even then they still demanded taxes and fees from us, so we could only give to them and had no food for ourselves, and in the end we had to find a safer place to live. I saw villagers from Twa Ni Gone and Bpa Reh Si. Since they were forced to relocate they have to get a pass to go back to work in their old villages each day. One pass is only good for 3 days so they are always travelling, and the Short Pants group is always interrogating them along their way. If they just interrogated them I wouldn't mention it, but now they are interrogating them, searching their bags and confiscating whatever money and other things they find. They beat people and kill people. They've killed many innocent people they've seen along the path. In March, Shan Bpu beat the pastor who had baptised him before his wedding [*when he forced Naw O— to marry him in December 1998*]. Many people in the village saw it. The people who had been ordered to go back and cut down trees in their village didn't have passes with them so he beat all of them, and he beat the pastor more than the others. He said the pastor didn't have a pass, so he beat him. That pastor had baptised him before his wedding. Now they've said that they [*the Sa Thon Lon*] plan to kill thirty people per month between

Shwegyin and Mone, and thirty more between Mone and Tantabin. Among the thirty that they kill, one will be a bad person and the rest will be good [*innocent*] people. If they kill thirty people each month then eventually all the people will be gone.

Q: Did you hear about the KNLA shooting at a car and burning it near Kyun Bin Seik?

A: That was the Short Pants group who shot and burned that car. They ordered the car to stop but it didn't stop until the driver saw them raise their arms. Then they told the driver, "You didn't stop when I called, you are being disrespectful to me". The driver said he hadn't heard, but they shot up the car and then burned it. After that they demanded that the people of all the villages around there pay the cost of that car.

Q: When did you start building the road [*from Na Than Gwin to Mone*]?

A: They started it in March. From March to May [*1999*]. For those two months we had no time to rest. They forced people from every village, from Yan Myo Aung and all the other villages. Starting in Na Than Gwin, the people in Ah Nya Su, Ohn Bin Su, and Ohn Chit Gone had to dig as far as Nga Nwah Seik. Other villagers had to dig from Nga Nwah Seik to Say Bpa Leh and on to Haw Ko Ghaw, and as for us, we had to dig from Yay Leh to Twa Ni Gone. For the road to connect to Say Bpa Leh, people from Ler Doh, Gah Kyi Seik, Leh Pa, Ywa Gyi Inn and Yan Myo Aung had to go and dig. They forced many people to go to dig that road. The road is ten cubits [*15 feet/5 m*] wide and three cubits [*5 feet/1.5 m*] high. Each person from our area has to build a section 17 cubits [*26 feet / 9 m*] long. We had to take our own food. They forced us to work on it for four or five days, then stop for three or four days, then work on it again for four or five days. I already worked on it two or three times, and we also had to work on the road beside our village at the same time. The road beside our village goes from Yan Myo Aung into the forest, but I think it will go to Mone in the future. Now we've heard that they've called people to work on it again.

Now they're demanding that we give money for the bridges [*along the new road from Na Than Gwin to Mone*]. They're demanding 600 *Kyat* from each household. They came and confiscated the wood that people had cut for their houses, they saw it and confiscated it all. Then they demanded that people go and buy that wood from them and use it to build the bridges. For the foundation of the bridges we had to buy bricks, cement, powdered lime and nails. We had to buy everything for them. Every village has to do that.

We have to do 'volunteer labour' carrying things into the hills. We call it "Chaw Gyi" [*'big portering'*]. We have to carry stones, build car roads and build bridges along the car roads so that their troops can go up into the hills. Then they also demand people to go and do 'volunteer labour' for them in their camp. Not only do we have to work for them, they also demand that we give them thatch, wood, and bamboo; we must give them these things all the time.

Q: Do you have to give rice?

A: We have to give it for free. People have to give paddy for free from all of the fields east of the car road from Mone to Ler Doh [*Kyauk Kyi*]. Whether you plant the field or not you must give them three baskets from each acre for free or they confiscate all your paddy as

well as your field. As for the fields west of the car road, whether they yield well or not we have to sell them thirteen baskets from each acre. It's called 'obligation' paddy. They say we must fulfil our 'obligation', and that they will arrest and kill anyone who cannot. They said they would give 400 *Kyat* per basket, but then they cut some out [*for themselves*] and only pay 300 *Kyat* per basket for the rest. I have ten acres so I have to give 130 baskets. Ten acres can only produce 200 baskets, or not even 200 baskets if the soil is poor. And you still have to pay other taxes and fees, so what will you do? When people hire themselves out or do anything to earn money so that they can pay the porter fees and taxes, the Burmese demand the money you make from your work as well, so when the time comes to pay the porter fees and taxes we have no money and we have to sell our livestock. Sometimes no one could buy our livestock so we had to borrow money to pay them.

Interview: 25: Sa Thone Lone Guerilla Unit, Forced labour, porter,

Name: "Pu Nya Thu"
Sex: Male
Age: 70
Ethnicity: Karen
Occupation: Farmer
Religion: Christian
Marital Status: Married with 5 children
Address: Myeh Yeh village, Mone township, Karen State
Date of Interview: May 1999
Source: KHRG

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: 4 days ago. My daughter looked at our situation and knew that we couldn't stay there, so she called us to come here and we came. We were afraid and wanted to come. The Burmese are abusing people all the time, but I just stay in my house so I don't know much in detail. I know that they won't allow us to walk at night or to go to the forest, and that if we go to another village we have to take a pass or they'll kill us easily if they want to. If they decide not to kill you they still beat you.

Q: Have you ever seen the Short Pants soldiers?

A: I haven't seen them, but they came near my house and walked around in our village. I heard that in other villages they've beaten and tortured people. People are afraid of them because if you're walking on the path and you suddenly see them you're supposed to sit down and you must not look at their faces. If you look at their faces they kick you at once and say, "Why are you looking at my face? Am I handsome or something?" You're supposed to show respect to them by stopping and sitting down, and you can only get up and walk again after they've passed.

Q: Has the situation in your village changed since you were young?

A: The situation in our place is getting worse and worse. If we compare my youth to my old age, things are very different. When I was young we were free to work, to travel, and

to gather fish from the ponds. Later we were no longer free to gather them, and now the Burmese gather them every year but the Karen aren't ever allowed. In the past, the Karen and Burman sections of Myeh Yeh took turns gathering food from the ponds, Karen for 3 years and then Burmese for the next 3 years. But now the Burmese gather fish from the ponds every year and don't allow the Karen to gather anything at all. Our living is becoming more and more difficult. People with fields east of the [*Mone – Kyauk Kyi*] road must give them 20 baskets of paddy from each acre for free. As for the fields west of the road, people there must sell paddy to them for a very low price. This only started happening recently.

Q: Did your children ever have to do forced labour?

A: My son came back to the village not long ago and he had to hide himself most of the time. We had to pay 'volunteer labour' fees whenever he didn't go [*for forced labour*]. Sometimes 400 or 500 *Kyat*, sometimes 100 to 300. You must give it even if you have no money, or you must go even if you can't go. When you don't have money to give them you must sell whatever you have and give them the money. People do it this way.

There is a Burmese boy named K— from Yan Myo Aung. The Burmese soldiers captured him in the village and forced him to go to the mountains as a porter. He was sick when they were in the mountains so he thought it would be better if he escaped, and he ran. They recaptured him and beat him until he couldn't move, then they ordered his parents to come and take him back down from the mountains. He was sick and they had beaten him very badly. His parents had to borrow money and hire Burmese villagers to go and carry him back home. When he got back he was in very bad condition and couldn't walk, but he's better now. He is around 18 or 19 years old. That happened in March this year [*1999*].

Q: What do the Burmese troops usually do when they come to your village?

A: In our village they don't do much, but in other villages they steal livestock. I heard that in Twa Ni Gone they entered the village and fired their guns. People ran away, and they killed people, pigs, chickens and ducks and ate the livestock. They are forcing people to cut down their trees and also to cut down the forest all around their villages. There is no benefit, they just cut down the forest and leave it lying there. The villagers who have been relocated have to go back to their old villages and cut down all the mango, coconut and other fruit trees. That happened in Myeh Yeh, Ter Bpaw and Po Thaug Su villages.

Q: How do you feel to be here [*in a refugee camp*]?

A: I feel happy to be here and people here have welcomed us nicely, but I feel sad for the people who remain in my village. They have difficulty finding food to eat, and if the situation gets much worse it will be difficult for them to survive.

Q: Will you go back if the situation gets better?

A: The Burmese said, "Myeh Yeh village is full of rebels", so I think it might be better for my village to simply disappear. The KNLA came by our village sometimes, so the Burmese accused all the Myeh Yeh villagers of being rebels. I don't want to stay there anymore. I am very old so there will probably be no chance for me to ever go back again, but some people here might be able to return later.

**Interview: 26: Forced relocation, forced labour, forced porter, Sa Thone
Lone Guerilla Unit**

Name: "Pi Naw Htoo"
Sex: Female
Age: 75
Ethnicity: Karen
Occupation: Farmer
Religion: Christian
Marital Status: Married with 3 children
Address: Myeh Yeh village, Mone township, Karen State
Date of Interview: May 1999

["Pi Naw Htoo" was interviewed shortly after arriving in Thailand as a refugee.]

Q: Are any villagers still living in Myeh Yeh?

A: Nobody is living in the village. People were forced to relocate to Yan Myo Aung a long time ago. Now many people are leaving Yan Myo Aung to go to places which they think will be safer for them.

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: We arrived here yesterday at 5 p.m. We couldn't work there anymore so we came. I worked a plantation and my children were working on a field. We couldn't work because we were afraid of the Burmese. If we went to work we had to take a pass, and if we didn't have a pass they could arrest us, hit and kill us if they wanted. That's why we couldn't stay any longer. We were working in our bean field, but they said, "Going to the forest is not allowed!", so we couldn't go to our bean field for a week or two and then our crop was partly ruined and we couldn't get enough food. They [*the SPDC*] are getting worse and worse each day. We were under their control, so we always had to be afraid of them. We couldn't work for our food, so we had to sell what we had to buy food. We sold and sold until everything was gone, and then how could we continue to live? We were living in fear and hunger, so we came here.

Q: But you are old, so what did you have to be afraid of?

A: We had to worry and be afraid for our children who were doing work for us. We worried that the Burmese would beat them when they were going to the fields. Moreover, they have to go for sentry duty for three days at a time, and sometimes they force people who are doing sentry duty to go as porters. Just before I left a child from our village was forced to go portering from sentry duty. He's already disappeared for two weeks, but we don't know where he is. His name is Saw Htoo Gkee, he's about 20 years old. He is single.

Q: What about your own children?

A: The Burmese forced them to do 'volunteer labour' often. The Burmese forced them to dig roads, and the DKBA forced them to build pagodas. Every day they had to dig earth and carry earth for road construction. If you go along the route you can see group after group

of people. They have to go for three days at a time. They don't give them anything. You have to take your own food, work for them as a 'volunteer' and come back with nothing. They call it 'volunteer labour'. You must sleep at the place where they force you to work. The DKBA are rebuilding the Klaw Maw pagoda and forcing people to work on it. The Burmese Short Pants group forced us to build a road. For that labour, you must prepare your own food and go, dig earth for three days, come back and then another group must go as you did.

Q: Who is the DKBA commander?

A: Commander Law Plah. They are building a pagoda at Maw Lay and staying there [*this pagoda is in northern Mone township, while the Klaw Maw pagoda is further south in Kyauk Kyi township*]. It takes two hours to walk to Maw Lay.

Q: Who are the commanders of the Short Pants group?

A: Shan Bpu and Bo Maung Maung. If they come you really need to be afraid of them, because they kill people wrongly. Recently they killed four or five Twa Ni Gone villagers at a fishpond. They didn't ask them anything, just killed them quickly. Those villagers were still young. That's why we are afraid of them. The Short Pants group demand money and food from the villagers, then they eat some and throw some away just to make the Karen people poor. They treat Karen people differently from Burmans; in 'volunteer work', portering, taxes and fees they always treat the Karen people worse. If they see a Karen person going to work and want to slap, beat or kill them they do it freely, but not to Burmans. Now a battle took place at T'Kaw Pwa and Way Sweh so they have gone to torture the villagers there. The battle happened about two weeks ago.

Q: Some people say that the Short Pants group will leave and be replaced by another group. Is that true?

A: We just heard that, that's all. We heard that a 'white uniform' group will come, but we've never seen them. We don't really know whether they'll come or not and what they'll do to us when they come. We are caught between so many groups, we just couldn't take it any more so we came here. We'd never seen this place before and we had no idea of the situation here, we just walked here like blind people. We prayed along the way and God led us here. We came here and we are now relying on you, so please take care of us.

Interview: 27: Forced Labor, Extra-judicial killing, Porters, Landmines, Looting

Name:	"Naw Lay Wah"
Sex:	Female
Age:	25
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital Status:	Married with two children aged 5 months and 4 years
Address:	Pah Klu village, T'Nay Hsah township, Karen State

Date of Interview: July 1999
Source: KHRG

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: I arrived here one month ago, to bring my child to hospital.

Q: Were you there when the Burmese came to your village?

A: Yes, when we came here, they were still staying in the village. They have come to every village and haven't left yet. Sometimes they stayed for ten days in our village and sometimes only two or three days, then they would go back to Meh Pleh. They have about 200 or 300 soldiers with camps in Meh Pleh and Ker Ghaw. Last year the Burmese troops who came were IB 44 [*sic: actually LIB 44*] and LIB 118. The commander of LIB 118 they call Kyaw Zay Ya. One of their groups went up to Loh Baw, one has gone to Thay K'Dtee, and another one has gone to Po Thay Kyu. They are patrolling the fields, divided into four groups. One group is left in Pah Klu. The Ko Per Baw follow the Burmese, but they stay separately from them while they are in the village. They said that they plan to build a camp and will force the villagers to build it for them. Also the villagers worry that they will capture the men to be porters, so the men don't dare stay in the village. Only the women dare to stay.

Q: When the Burmese came to your village, did they kill any villagers?

A: Before I came here they killed one villager in Taw Oak village. His name was Pa Eh Kweh, and he was about 20 years old. They accused him of being a spy for the KNU, but it wasn't true. He was just a crazy man. When they came to our village, they shot their guns—I don't know if they were shooting Karen soldiers or villagers. They are always shooting their guns in the village, both big weapons and small guns. If they see people run, they shoot them all. They started shooting last year, and they don't think beforehand whether they're aiming at villagers or the KNLA. The Burmese accuse the DKBA of doing the shooting and the DKBA accuse the Burmese of doing it.

Q: Did any villagers get hurt then?

A: Yes, 3 villagers: P— (40-50 years old) broke his leg, Pa M— (40 years old) got hit on the shoulder, and Naw W— (13 years old) got injured in her leg [*Naw W— is a girl and the other two are men*]. P— came to stay here too. The Ko Per Baw asked the villagers to take him to Ker Ghaw, but when he arrived there the Ko Per Baw didn't take care of him, so he came back to Pah Klu. After that the people asked him to come to xxxx [*refugee camp*], so he came here. The Burmese didn't take care of the other villagers either. Before they already came one time and killed one villager named Maung Tin Hta. They shot him because he ran. He was about 30 years old, and he was married. It happened in the cold season when I delivered my baby [*about February 1999*].

Q: Do they force the villagers to do *loh ah pay*?

A: Yes, if the men don't stay in the village they force the women to go and carry rice. They force one villager per house to go. If the villagers are not free to go, they have to hire someone for 500 *Kyat* per day. We have to pay the village head and then the village head

pays the one who goes in the villager's place. I didn't go for *loh ah pay*, but my husband did. The villagers have to go one or two times every year. They went to build a road one time in Ker Ghaw and Kwih Lay because the Burmese have camps there, and they haven't finished that road yet.

Q: Do they come to capture or collect porters?

A: They tell the village head to collect the porters. If they don't ask first, they arrest them themselves. They collect the porters for one month and sometimes two months at a time. My husband fled and escaped before the Burmese arrived in the village, but before that he always hired porters [*to go in his place*]. The villagers who went to porter had to go to Loh Baw and Toh Thu Kee, then to Lay Gaw Pu. They told the villagers they had to go for only five days, but if it takes more than five days and the Burmese haven't come back yet, the porters can't come back either. I heard that they beat and kick the villagers from Maw Toh Ta Lay. One porter stepped on a landmine and they shot him. They didn't bring him back to the village. A villager from Pah Klu witnessed it.

Q: Do you hear whether they feed the porters?

A: Yes, they feed them but not enough rice. They eat twice per day but only just a little per person. They don't get curry, they just eat rice with salt. The Burmese eat rice with oil or curry. They all came back to the village, but when they arrived they were very sick because they hadn't had enough food. They were thirsty also. They got water to drink but not enough because the Burmese didn't allow them to drink. They didn't allow them even to clean their faces. When they came back, they said that they didn't get enough food and it was bad food. The weather was very hot and they didn't have enough water. Along the way if the Burmese forced them to keep moving, they had to go.

Q: Do you now the aim of the Burmese in coming to your village?

A: Their aim is to do logging and to guard it.

Q: Did Ko Per Baw also force the villagers to do *loh ah pay*?

A: Yes, they forced them to carry rice and bullets. The villagers had to hire porters to go for them, at the same price that the Burmese soldiers collected. They forced them to carry one or two times a month. They also forced the villagers to send them pork and chicken. The Ko Per Baw commander's name is Pu Lay Yo. Mostly they stay in Ker Ghaw because they have a camp there. It is about 3 hour walk to Pah Klu from Ker Ghaw.

Q: Are there landmines around Pah Klu village?

A: Yes, KNLA landmines. If the Burmese came to sleep in the village, they planted landmines at night near the village. Mostly the cattle stepped on the landmines, but two villagers died from stepping on landmines. They were Pa Kyaw Lu, who was about 30 years old, and I don't remember the name of the other one.

Q: Do you have a village head?

A: The villagers elected xxxx. The villagers also chose T— - she is about 40 years old - to be the Burmese village head. The Karen soldiers [*KNLA*] elected xxxx to become village head.

Q: Did the KNLA ever go to your village?

A: Yes. There was a battle in June before I came here. Karen soldiers and Ko Per Baw were fighting each other. If it happens in the village they don't cause problems [*afterwards*], but if it happens outside the village they get annoyed. If the Burmese or Ko Per Baw step on a landmine, they say that the villagers didn't tell them and they fine them. If they step on a landmine, they force the villagers to give one pig and one or two *viss* of chicken. Mostly they fine them a pig. The Ko Per Baw also fine the villagers.

Q: Did any villagers flee and stay outside the village?

A: Yes, they stayed in the farmfield huts. The Burmese don't say anything about that in the rainy season, but they don't allow the villagers to stay there in the dry season. They force them back to stay in the village. If they see any villagers staying outside the village, they accuse them of contacting the Kaw Thoo Lei [*KNU/KNLA*].

Q: Do you think the Burmese come to the villages to do good things for the villagers?

A: The Burmese did not come to do good things. They just came to torture us. If they see no one in our house they accuse it of being a Kaw Thoo Lei house, and they take everything from the house. They take everything. At my mother's house they took everything, even the fire grill. They took all the pots and plates. They also eat the chicken and pigs of villagers who raise them.

Interview: 28: Forced Labor, Livelihood, Child Labor, Forced Porters, Arrest, Extra-judicial

Name:	“Pa Po Doh”
Sex:	Male
Age:	24
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital Status:	not stated
Address:	Tee Hsah Ra village, Myawaddy township, Karen State
Date of Interview:	July 1999
Source:	KHRG

Q: Why did you come to *xxxx* [*refugee camp in Thailand*]?

A: We came because the Burmese soldiers oppressed us with forced labour and caused us many problems until we couldn't tolerate them anymore. The Burmese also ate our chickens and livestock and we had to reimburse people for them. I always had to go for *loh ah pay* every day. They forced people who live in the fields to go, and if they didn't the soldiers chased them and captured them. The fields are destroyed because no one is working on them. We couldn't solve these problems and we were dying. Some came here and some stayed there, but I came alone.

Q: What kind of soldiers are in your village?

A: There are Burmese soldiers from IB #44 [*sic: actually Light Infantry Division #44*]. They have about 30 soldiers under Company Commander Pa Nya Plah. He is Karen, but the tone of his speech is up and down like people's from the lower place [*plains of central Burma*], not flat like ours. The Burmese stay in the village and the monastery. They don't have a camp, but they sleep for 7-10 days in the village when they're on patrol. Sometimes they come and go on the same day. The DKBA are living in the village too. They don't demand fees but they force us to work whenever they go anywhere. They also eat the livestock in the village, and if they eat pigs and chickens then the villagers have to reimburse the owners. They sometimes ask for livestock that they want to eat, but they also take it at night, along with rice from the villagers' houses. If they don't see the owner of the house, they go into the house and take their things. They took Naw T—'s two chickens, one big tin of rice, and one pack of Ajinomoto [*MSG seasoning*]. The DKBA shoot their guns wherever they are living just to make noise.

Q: Do people in your village have to porter as well?

A: If the Burmese call it *loh ah pay* it means we have to go as porters, but if they call it "portering" it means we have to both carry and pay them a fee. People who go for *loh ah pay* have to porter also. Some disappear for one week and some for the whole month, and they still have to pay the porter fees. The DKBA also forces the villagers and does the same things as the Burmese. Just before I came I had to go to Bu Deh once and to Tha Bya Yeh Gone once as well. They captured me in the village and forced me to carry to Tha Bya Yeh Gone. I carried bullets for M16's [*a type of common assault rifle*]. Each person's load was 20-30 viss [*32-48 kg / 70-105 lb*]. It takes half a day to walk there and I had to sleep there 2 nights. Then they released us and another group replaced us. For *loh ah pay* the Burmese also force people to build their camps and bunkers and to carry their things. When they see us outside the village they capture us for portering, and if they see us in the village they order us to go. If we refuse to go, they capture us anyway. Four people from the village have to go each month, and each family has to give 600 *kyat* for them.

People who do not go to porter have to hire someone for 500 *Kyat* per day. But for the villagers who are sick or who have no money, the Burmese wait for a while and if they still cannot pay then they give them trouble. They make them go for more days when they become well. Also women who have no husbands and women whose husbands are ill must go. As for children, if their parents cannot go, they have to go. The oldest labourer is about forty and the youngest person is about sixteen. They have to take along their own food and start work at 7 a.m. and work until 5:30 p.m. in the afternoon. At Tha Bya Yeh Gone we had to build their shelter, carry wood, and build their bunkers. At Old Wangka [*on the border with Thailand*] we had to dig and then pour cement for their bunkers. They let us take a rest once to eat and they guarded us while we worked. They shouted at us and wouldn't allow people to rest when they were tired, but they didn't beat us.

Q: What were the conditions like when you were portering?

A: They gave us food, sometimes it was enough and sometimes not enough. They didn't beat or kick me but they hit my friend from the village. There were four of us from the village: Pa M—aged 25, H— aged 24, and T— aged 24. They beat Pa M— because he

could not carry things. We were at the foot of Tha Bya Yeh Gone. They kicked him twice, then they made him stand up. They decreased the weight of his pack and forced him to carry on.

Q: Does your village have a village head?

A: Yes, his name is xxxx, but he was arrested by the DKBA. Their company commander's name is L— from Brigade 999, and he has about 20-30 soldiers. They accused the village head of collecting money for the opposite side [*KNU/KNLA*]. Then my friend heard that [*DKBA*] Commander P— would send the headman to xxxx, but we weren't sure what would happen to him. We were afraid of the DKBA because they knew us from the village and because they had chased us once before. He [*his other friend*] was clever, so he ran first and left a letter behind [*for the DKBA*]. When I was told that he ran, I ran too. If you don't run you never know what they will do to you, and you can't do anything to stop it, though they can do anything to you if they capture you. We couldn't stay, so we had to run. As my friend was leaving he heard on the radio [*probably a KNLA-supplied walkie-talkie*] that the Burmese had captured the village head, and he told me that later. We dared not return because the village head had told us to avoid them if he was captured. They put him in Ra Ma Tee [*Myawaddy*] Jail and still haven't released him.

Q: Did you ever hear of the DKBA or the Burmese killing any villagers?

A: Yes, the DKBA shot six people on July 10 [1999] in Tee Hsah Ra. I was sleeping at night but I heard it, though I didn't go and look. It was near my house, only two minutes walk away. They came at night to shoot people in the fields, then they came back [*into the village*] to shoot people in the houses. They shot them because they accused them of casting spells over people. But they were villagers, just simple people who cannot do magic or cause harm to people, but only work in the fields. They didn't belong to the opposite side [*KNU*], they only worked in the fields. One villager disliked them because she thought they had cast a spell on her husband. But everybody saw that he was a fool, even though he said that the other family was making magic to do him harm. Pa Maung Wah told him that if he had truly done magic things to harm him, he would drink *Thit Sa Yea* [*“vow water”, which once it is drunk forces people to keep promises made or face dire consequences*] and confess, so that whatever he had done would come back to him. But the man didn't believe him and threatened that he would wait for his wife's brother to come back and kill all of them. The wife also had a son who died, and she accused them of casting a magic spell on harm him. So she asked her younger brother, who had joined the DKBA, to go and kill them. First they stabbed Pa Gyi Reh in his field at 9 o'clock. Then they went to his father's field and killed his three brothers and his father, Maung Wah [*a.k.a. Pa Noh Wah*]. Then they came to shoot his mother in the house. People called her Pa Gher Mo [*a.k.a. Daw Aye Khin*] and she was well over 40 years old. Pa Gher [*her son*] was over 35 and he was married. His brother Pa Saw Leh is 20 years old, Pa Saw Hsah was 16, and Saw Bleh Ku was 13. There are 6 people in the family; 4 of them were murdered and only 2 women are left. They still live in Tee Hsah Ra and are married already. The DKBA [*officer(s)*] came to look after this happened, but they didn't say anything about it. They didn't accept the fact that they had killed them, and so they're trying to say that it was an accident, that no one killed them. They are going to make the case disappear and make peace between each

other. Commander Maung Chit Thu's soldiers killed them, but he told us it was an accident. But he knew about it because his soldiers had to get permission from him to kill these people. If he doesn't give permission they can't do anything.

Q: Did you hear about soldiers burning down people's houses or rice barns?

A: They burned villagers' rice barns this year in the dry season, around Christmas time [1998]. The DKBA burned the rice straw [used as fodder for cattle] and paddy at Meh Pleh Wah Kee. The troops were from IB 999 [Brigade] and their commander was Moe Kyo, but we heard he died in Mae Sot [Thailand] after he was injured by a landmine. Now the commander of IB 999 is P—, the one who recently moved to Tee Hsah Ra. His commander was L—, who arrested the village head.

Q: Do you think that the Burmese and the DKBA are collaborating in your village

A: Yes, they cooperate and patrol in the same group. Both of them are so rude to people who live in Tee Hsah Ra. We couldn't deal with the forced labour and fee collections, so we fled and came here for a better future. We still have people there who will come here. Some villagers still have their fields and are waiting to finish the harvest before they come. I came here alone but my wife and children arrived yesterday. We dare not go back, my friend or I, because the DKBA is still looking for us.

Interview: 29: Forced Porters, Women Porters, Child Labor, Looting, Rice Quota, Landmines

Name: "Saw Daniel"
Sex: Male
Age: 70
Ethnicity: Karen
Occupation: Farmer
Religion: Christian
Marital Status: Married with eight children
Address: Dta Greh (Pain Kyone) town, Hlaing Bwe township, Karen State
Date of Interview: July 1999

Dta Greh (Pain Kyone) town is in northeastern Pa'an District; the Karen consider it a township of its own, but the SPDC considers it part of Hlaing Bwe township.]

Q: Did you come here to stay?

A: I came to take care of my wife. The medic sent her to Mae Sot [in Thailand] but the white foreigners there couldn't do anything, so she came back and stays with our children. In the last few days she has been feeling worse, so she sent our youngest child to go back and bring me from the village. So I followed my youngest child here.

Q: What is the situation in Dta Greh?

A: Recently the situation has become worse. It was a big village, 100 houses in the past. But many villagers have left and now there are only 40-50 houses. During the old times the

Burmese settled down in the middle of the village, but now they are camped about one or two furlongs from the houses and they don't allow the villagers to go there. There are about 10-20 soldiers from Division 44. The Burmese were staying in the village when the Karen soldiers [KNLA] came and told the villagers to flee. That happened one or two years ago. The Karen soldiers were going to fight the Burmese in the village and they were worried that the villagers would get injured. So they told the villagers to stay outside the village; some fled, and some stayed at Pa Nya Plih about one furlong from our village. As for us, we have fields between Pa Nya Plih and the village, so we went to stay in the fields. But the Burmese didn't allow us to flee and called the villagers back to stay in the village.

Q: Do the villagers have a headman?

A: The village heads work for 1-2 years and then run away. They are not honest. The people who become village heads don't follow through, and we don't know what they will do for us. We are living in difficulty. Now the villagers are working together with 'Dta Lah Lu Gyi' [*monthly village head*'], who is always a woman. The villagers elect her every month. The villagers work for Dta Lah Lu Gyi throughout the year, and each house gives 1 one basket of paddy to them for taking care of us. The villager would like to elect men but they dare not. When the DKBA or the Burmese come to the village, it is a different matter with a male village head. Once in the past they came to collect emergency porters and the headman couldn't find any for them. Then they beat the headman and the people dared not complain. The Burmese stay at the village, and when the Battalion is going out [*on patrol*], they force the village head to collect porters.

Q: Do you stay in the village?

A: Yes, I stay in the village, but when my wife came here I had to stay in the farmfield hut with our cows and belongings. They allowed us to stay in our farmfield huts during the rainy season, but after finishing the fields we all had to come back and stay in the village. When it was time for the villagers to come back, they didn't care that the villagers who have many animals can't come back and stay in the village. They need to stay in their farmfield huts. Once before when the Ko Ko fruit was ripe their cows went down to the fields, and the soldiers captured them and fined the villagers. So this time they dared not come back and stay in the village. Some are still staying in the farmfield huts and the hills. They can't stay in the field huts forever, but their livestock is there. We can't watch them all the time. Whenever the animals go down to their camp they fine us, and we can't pay them. Sometimes they fine us 300-400 *kyat*.

Q: Do they force the villagers to porter?

A: If they can't collect people [*by demanding quotas from village heads*], they capture porters. If they cannot capture, they demand them from the villagers and the villagers have to hire porters for them. Bpay Pwet [*payroll troops*] bring a salary once a month for the Burmese who stay in the mountains [*and collect porters to go with them*]. Sometimes they come to rotate their troops, then the troops collect the porters. We have to hire the porters at 100 *kyat* per day. Sometimes the villagers hear that the Burmese will capture porters and they send a message to the village, so all the men leave the village. The Burmese came to call me but said, "Ah, Grandfather, we won't force you to do anything", and then

they left me alone. As for the young people who they can catch, they force them to go. My children stay in the farmfield hut but they had to go when the Burmese forced them to send rations by bullock cart.

Q: Do the villagers go to porter or pay the fees instead?

A: As for Bpay Pwet [*payroll troops*], they come and call the women to go with them. As for portering, mostly the villagers give money to them instead of going. They collect 100 *kyat* per day for porters, and if they demand 5 villagers for 10 days, the villagers have to pay 5,000 *kyat*. The village head plans out who will go to porter in turns. If we don't go this time, next time we will have to go. Before people go to porter the villagers have to collect for them, because their wives and children have no food to give them. They don't tax the houses with no men, but we all have to support them. The widows who are very poor only have to pay 20-25 *kyat*.

Q: Did anyone from Dta Greh ever die while portering?

A: Last year one porter died. His name was Hsah Po Dee, about 25 years old. He stepped on a landmine. The Burmese captured him while his wife was pregnant, just before she was supposed to give birth. He was going to hire someone to replace him, but he missed the car at Dta Greh Bridge, and so he had to go. Two groups of people came to replace the group he was in, but he didn't come back. Later the porters who were captured by the Burmese and went together with him returned to the village and said he had been injured by stepping on a mine. He shouted, but the Burmese didn't take care of him. He didn't die right away, but they couldn't go any further with him. No one carried him. His wife is still living in the village. After she heard about her husband, she gave birth to a son, but she was not healthy so she gave her son away to someone. I don't know if her son is alive or dead. She lives with her two other children. I don't think anyone can look after them because her mother-in-law is a widow and so is she. The Burmese didn't come to tell her anything. After people knew about it they went and asked for compensation, but the Burmese refused to listen.

Q: Do the villagers have to go for *loh ah pay*?

A: Mostly the women and girls have to go for *loh ah pay*, but sometimes they force the men to go. People over 40 years old have to work, and children start going when they reach 15 years of age. If the children are too small they cannot carry the thatch shingles [*which the villagers are forced to provide to the Army camps*]. The villagers have to send one person per house. If they tell the village to collect ten people at a time, then people have to go in turns. If they force them to come to this side [*of the mountains, i.e. a long trek of portering*], the villagers have to hire someone for 100 *Kyat* a day if they cannot go. But if they capture villagers, the villagers can't hire anyone. They didn't force them to go to Paw Yay Pu or another place close to the village; mostly, they forced them to go to Gkah Deh. They are all women who come to this area [*as porters*] because before when the men came, they forced them to carry their bullets and rice rations. But when the women arrive at Gkah Deh they release them.

Q: Did they force villagers to do other projects for *loh ah pay*?

A: They force them to work whenever they come up to the village. When they construct a

building like a church last summer, they forced the villagers to work the whole summer. They started to build it in January and it lasted until May [1999]. The villagers had to carry sand, cement, and brick, and then make a fence all day and night. Only when they finished building could they have time to rest. Two years ago the villagers had to build a road between Dta Greh and Ka Kyo. They were rebuilding an old car road from the time of the foreigners [British colonial period]. They forced each village to do a number of furlongs. It is three furlongs between Dta Greh and Ka Kyo, and the villagers built the road between Ka Kyo and Ka Mah Ko. The villagers from Dta Greh, Mo Nain, and Ka Kyo had to build a furlong end. They started to build from Dta Greh and went up to Yeh Mee Lah ['5-mile'], but the road didn't go down to the town. It went back into the forest and passed above the town. Sometimes they forced the villagers to work from 7 a.m. until 11 p.m. without rest. Don't even think that they'd pick them up by car to go to the work site! It was very difficult to walk, and it takes over one hour to walk to the place where they built the road. But they didn't beat or punish the villagers who went to build the road, and they allowed them to fetch water to drink.

Q: Did they feed the villagers when they were doing *loh ah pay*?

A: The villagers had to eat all their own food when they built the road, but if they go to Gkah Deh the soldiers feed them. As for building the school, the soldiers hired carpenters and the villagers had to feed them all.

Q: How do the villagers make a living if they have to work for the Burmese and also get taxed?

A: They work their fields and transplant paddy. But if the Burmese come the villagers can't work, and they flee. If they have an 'emergency' [i.e. they need porters or forced labour immediately] they won't let men or women flee, and they capture them all. The men are very important for them. Sometimes when the troops need help they are very strict. Then the villagers must hire women to transplant the paddy for them.

Q: When the Burmese come and collect porters and labourers, do they collect anything else?

A: They come to the village to eat and drink and the villagers have to feed them. If they eat one pig, the villagers have to reimburse the owner. Anything that they want, the villagers have to pay for. When the troops from the camp come to eat in the village, the villagers have to repay for all of that [to those who were forced to provide the livestock and food]. You can't even describe all that they collect within twelve months.

They are not always Burmese soldiers. Sometimes officials come to town and talk about agricultural development and the villagers have to feed them too. They come to talk about how to plant and fertilise the rice. They came to tell us but they didn't do as they said. We never saw fertiliser or anything else. [The officials promise fertiliser as part of government programs but then steal it all themselves and sell it; meanwhile, the farmers are still expected to produce the fertilised second or third crop of the year, which they cannot do.] We have been doing the fields in Dta Greh for a long time, and it is not productive to fertilise the fields in that area. We were tired of doing what they taught us with the fertiliser; there was no improvement. Sometimes when they came to the village, we wanted

them to help us because we don't have anything and our living condition is poor. They came to tell us that they understand, but we don't understand them. If they understood, they would come and show us new methods. But they just come and tell us about them. They already knew that the earth wasn't fertile, but they came to check. Here the earth is better for planting mangoes and other fruit. Instead we transplanted ten baskets of *[paddy]* seeds and some years we harvested only 30-40 baskets, which was not enough for us. We had nothing to give to the civil servants *[rice quota collectors]*, but they also have to give to the government *[they must collect their given quota with no excuses]*. They taxed us three times this year and were very strict. Every year they collect Ta Won Gyay *['obligation' quota paddy]* from the farmers, five baskets for every 100. It has been very hot and dry there, so there is a lot of chaff, and when we take five baskets to them, they blow off the chaff with a fan and it becomes less. Last year there was no paddy because it was so hot and dry, so they asked for money instead. The government's price is three hundred *kyat* per basket *[actually it is several hundred kyat per basket, but the officials steal most of the rice quota payouts and give almost nothing to the farmers who are forced to hand over the rice]*. They gave three hundred *Kyat* for one basket and then you had to give more than that to the owner of the bullock cart who carried the paddy for you. But we had to pay 1,000 *kyat* three times because we had no paddy, and we couldn't stay without paying them *[in lieu of giving paddy]*. After collecting the first time, the village head took all the money and fled the village. Then they elected a new village head and he collected again. But that time there wasn't enough money, and so we had to give a third time. We gave 3,000 *Kyat* in total last year. The last two years there have been droughts and we didn't get enough paddy for seed, so we had to sell the cows and buy paddy seed from Maw Goh village. One basket of paddy is 500 *Kyat*. Before for one basket of rice *[after husking]* we had to pay 1,400 *Kyat*, but now we have to pay 1,600 *kyat*. That's why we're bitter. If we suffer any more than this, we'll all die.

Q: What do the troops do when they stay in your village?

A: They don't always stay there. Some troops come to stay for one month or more, then a new unit comes to replace them. They always change their troops. I don't know about Division 44; they have already stayed for 1-2 months. One month ago some troops came, but I don't know where they are now. They stayed on this side *[of the mountains]* and then they went down to the village.

Q: You said they killed one of their own soldiers.

A: Yes, that was within the past month, just when my child came to the village to get me. One of the Burmese officers had two chevrons *[Corporal, actually an NCO and not an officer]*. He was Karen, but he only spoke Burmese. He was Christian, not like the other Burmese. He got sick and the Burmese sent him to the clinic at the police building. Burmese soldiers took him there, and as they brought him back to the village they beat him along the way, and he was shouting. They tortured him all day long. When they reached the steps of the Pastor's house they let him sit. There was a woman there who was waiting at her Uncle's house. She asked him, "What happened to you?" He said, "I am not healthy". She asked "What is your religion?" and he said, "I am Christian and I have two children". He laid down, and then they came to get him. When they arrived there at the steps of Thra C-

—'s house, they beat him to death with a stick.

After they killed him they buried him. Then they went to Thra C—'s house and drank alcohol.

Q: Why do you think they killed him?

A: They were from the same unit but their religion was different, so they did not like him. I heard that afterwards they [*the soldiers*] went to tell their commander, and the commander was sorry for him and cried a lot. The commander asked his soldiers, "Why didn't you come to me and get medicine?" The soldiers told the commander he had got sick and died, they didn't tell him they had tortured him.

Q: It wasn't his commander who killed him?

A: The one who killed him was not his commander, he was a Corporal with two chevrons just like the one who died.

Q: When the troops enter the village do they eat the villagers' livestock?

A: We can't raise livestock because the soldiers take it and eat it. We can't even raise chickens. They take what they like. They don't ask the owners. I bred three geese and fed them in the evenings, but they came to capture them at night when we were asleep. If a dog or pig went after the geese they made a sound: "*gho gha, gho gha*", but I think that the Burmese grabbed their necks when they started to make this sound. Then they disappeared. Now they are stealing a lot but we can't do anything. They steal goats and shoot chickens in the daytime. In the past they respected the villagers but now they practice their immoral behaviour. Now that I look back on it, the situation has become worse this year. The villagers dare not complain. If we go to them they will tell us that we have no village head and so they will do as they like.

Q: How is the situation different now from when you were younger?

A: At first when they came, the situation was as bad as it is now. In between then and now they were friendly with the villagers. But now they are patrolling and also the DKBA are also patrolling, so the villagers have great difficulty. The DKBA has a camp in Myaing Gyi Ngu and some of them stay in the lower places [*the plains to the west and south*]. If they come down to the village or if they are going up [*into the hills*], they capture the villagers. They force them to carry things like the sarong and clothes of their [*DKBA*] wives. Mostly they need men but the men hide, therefore the girls have to go. They beat the villagers, which is why nobody wants to be the village head. This May they beat one of the village heads, who was a temporary headman. He can read and speak Burmese well. After they tortured him, he didn't want to be the village head any more. He told me that the DKBA beat him. They wanted villagers to go immediately, but he told them that they could not find anyone right away. They said, "The villagers are bad, and we already told you to get them". Then they beat him. He told me, "Brother-in-law, I cannot suffer anymore." He could not bear it anymore and so he fled from the village. After that whenever he heard about the Burmese or DKBA, he didn't face them.

Q: Did you have any problems coming here?

A: While we were coming here they were fighting at P— and people told us not to go there because the Ko Per Baw and Karen soldiers were shooting at each other. When we arrived in S— they told us that the Burmese had gone back already and weren't staying in P—, which is only two furlongs from S—. In P— an Indian whom I knew said that the Burmese had already gone down to P—. Then I asked him where the KNLA were staying, and he told me they were staying at N—. The Ko Per Baw shot at Karen soldiers at P— and 3 were wounded. When the Ko Per Baw were trying to take away the bodies of their friends, the Karen soldiers waited to shoot them again before leaving to stay at N—. We came and slept at B— and we met them. Then we slept at M— and another night in T—, and then we arrived here.

Interview: 30: Extra-judicial Killing, Looting, Arrest, Torture, Forced Porters, Human Minesweepers, Forced Relocation, Forced Labor, Extortion, Rice Quota, Rape

Name:	“Saw Lah Ku”
Sex:	Male
Age:	21
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital Status:	Married, no children
Address:	Pah Klu village, T’Nay Hsah township, Karen State
Date of Interview:	August 1999
Source:	KHRG

[When interviewed “Saw Lah Ku” had fled his village and was hiding on the Thai side of the border across the river from a group of internally displaced people at Tee Ner Hta, a vulnerable site near the border with Thailand. This site was later shelled by SPDC forces and the internally displaced villagers scattered.]

Q: What happened when the Burmese came to your village?

A: They came and shot to kill people. When the Burmese arrived within sight, you couldn't run or they would shoot you. If we heard that they were coming when they were still on the other side of the river, we could escape.

Q: Do you know of anyone whom the Burmese killed?

A: Yes, they shot and killed one villager named Maung Tin Hla from Pah Klu. It happened last year in the dry season. I know they've also killed others, but I'm not exactly sure whom or how. The last time when they came, over one month ago, they killed Du Lay Loh. I heard that they cut his throat. I dared not go back and see it because I am afraid of the Burmese.

Q: Do the Burmese stay in the village now?

A: We heard from the group that is arriving now that they are coming back to our village

again now. At the time that we ran and came here, the Burmese had gone back to Ker Ghaw, Meh Pleh, and Kway Sha. If the Burmese had been staying in the village we wouldn't have dared to escape. The DKBA aren't staying in Pah Klu, but they are staying in Taw Oak and they come to our village sometimes.

Q: Were you staying in the village when the Burmese came?

A: I was staying in our farmfield hut at a place we call T—. The Burmese considered us as rebels. There are about 40-50 huts in T— because the villagers all work their flat fields there. The villagers who have one field have one hut.

Q: When the Burmese came to your village, did they eat the villagers' livestock?

A: Yes, recently the Burmese have eaten a lot of the villagers' poultry. For every pig the owner eats, the Burmese eat 3-4. The Burmese said, "The villagers will breed poultry for us. When we come, we will eat it all." When they came to stay in Pah Klu they stole the villagers' pigs at night and nobody knew. Each pig weighed ten *viss* [16 kg / 35 lb] or more, and they beat them to death. They didn't let their commander know, and the villagers dared not complain. I don't know the name of the villagers they stole from; I just heard from the village elders that they stole pigs.

Q: If the villagers go to complain to the commander, what will the Burmese do?

A: I don't know. They will give some kind of problems to the villagers. The villagers dared not complain when they took rice from us. We just have to live with it.

Q: Did the Burmese ever arrest you or other villagers?

A: They arrested me last month when I came back to Pah Klu. I went back to get rice to eat. When I arrived at the village, they came at the same time and I had no time to flee. There is a river but I can't swim. I dared not flee. When they arrested and tied me up, my spirit nearly died. They tied me while they were holding their walkie-talkies and aiming a gun at me. I couldn't speak. They didn't beat me, but they interrogated me. They didn't shout at me because I could go along and give directions for them [*as a guide*]. They arrested me with two of my friends, but they released one named K—. The other is my best friend, Pa xxxx, and he is 21 or 22 years old. He is married and had one child but it died. They arrested us and tied us up, then they accused us of being Kaw Thoo Lei [*KNU/KNLA*], but we told them that we are not Kaw Thoo Lei and they shouldn't kill us. Then they forced us to go and give directions [*serve as guides*] for them because they don't know the way in the mountains. I went carefully along the way. If you didn't know the way, you would lose half your leg. We had to go with them for 7 days in the hills with landmines. We dared not go, but if we didn't go they would have shot us with their guns. We were afraid but had to go. We didn't step on any landmines and we guided them through the mountains. My best friend took them to L—, and I took them to T—. We didn't see each other because we had to give directions to two groups of soldiers. They were going in two columns of about 300 Burmese soldiers.

They arrested villagers they saw along the way. They forced me to carry a military bag, which was very heavy. I hoped that the Kaw Thoo Lei would shoot at them because I wanted to flee, but they didn't shoot. Then we arrived at the farmfield huts and slept one

night at L—. The Burmese wanted to visit another flat field on the mountain, so they forced me to take them there. After that they returned to their place. I had to sleep and eat together with them. They are Burmese soldiers, but they can speak Karen. They wear LIB 44 on their badges. The commander's name is T— - he is a Karen national but a Burmese commander. The next morning they called me to go again. I asked them often, "Won't you release me?" but they told me that they wouldn't release me unless they captured some Kaw Thoo Lei. I told them that the Kaw Thoo Lei are in the mountains, and he asked me how many there were. I said that there are only one or two people, not so many. They went out again, and I thought about how the Kaw Thoo Lei don't like them and have planted landmines. Before daybreak we heard the explosions. Three Burmese soldiers died in two days because they stepped on landmines. After they stepped on the landmines, they released us at L—, close to T—. They fined us two chickens each, and then we went back to our farmfield huts.

After they released me, they went down to Pah Klu the same day and arrested another villager. He was Du Lay Loh, the one I told you about before. The Burmese went to ask the villagers from Pah Klu, "Is he Kaw Thoo Lei?", and the villagers answered, "No, he is not Kaw Thoo Lei." But the Burmese said the villagers were lying because they could see the villagers were afraid. Then I heard they would kill them all in the evening. Ah! I decided I would flee. The next morning it was raining, and we called each other and said that we would go to xxx [refugee camp in Thailand]. But I didn't arrive at xxx, I just arrived at Tee Ner Hta and stayed there. Along the way we had no rice, but the people who stay on the bank of the Moei River are our friends, and so they gave us rice to eat. We slept with our children only one night on the bank of the river, and we had to ride the [KNLA] soldiers' boat to this side.

Q: Did you hear of any plans to relocate your village?

A: They said they would drive us all out of the villages in the Meh Pleh Toh area. When I stayed with them, the Burmese told me themselves that they were ordered to clear the place and drive the villagers to a relocation site. I asked them, "Where will you force us to go?" and he told me, "I don't know. You have to ask the commander." I had to stay with the soldiers who arrested me, and they joked together. I said to them, "If you drive us to a relocation site, we will have no rice to eat." He said to me, "I don't know, because we were ordered to do it, so we have to. We wouldn't do it if we weren't ordered to do it." They are Karen people.

Q: Did they force the villagers to do *loh ah pay* also?

A: The Burmese also forced the villagers to do *loh ah pay* at Ko Ko. I never went there, but my friend went to work. I just heard from the other people who told me. They forced them to go 3-4 times a month for one day at a time. The villagers have to carry rice for them from Ko Ko back to Pah Klu. They force all the men and women to go. If the men dared not stay in the village [if there were no men there], they forced the women to go. They didn't force the younger people to work, only people over 20 years old. They forced people over 40 who could carry one basket of rice, too. In one village if they set a quota for ten people to go, then the villagers plan it out with the village head. The villagers who get sick talk with their friends and say, "This week I will go for you and next week you will go in my place."

Q: Do the villagers have to hire people to go for them?

A: Only for porter fees. Some villagers dared not go as porters, so they hired their friends to go instead. They didn't summon me, but we had to give rice. The Burmese look at the living situation of the villagers. From rich villagers they collect 5,000 *kyat* per month. There are over 100 houses, so if you collect money from all the houses, you will get many thousands. If you cannot pay you have to borrow money from your friends.

Q: Do they also collect rice from the villagers?

A: Yes, they collect one basket of rice from each farmfield hut. We have to give one basket of rice regularly every month. Even if we have no rice to eat, we have to feed them.

Q: You said that the Burmese collect porter fees. Do the DKBA also collect fees?

A: The DKBA don't collect money, but they force us to do *loh ah pay*. The villagers have to go and stay with them and cook rice and fetch water. They force us to do it once a month. As for the Burmese, they don't even care if they force us to go twice or three times a month. The Burmese are always forcing the villagers to go.

Q: Did you hear of soldiers raping any women in Pah Klu village?

A: I heard they slept with women but I don't know their names. There were three or four women and the people told me they were married. They are older than me. The Burmese soldiers went to the women's houses; they didn't call them [*to the Army camp*]. They couldn't sleep with the women, but they could hold their hands and legs. At that time I was together with them because the Burmese had arrested and tied me up at the time when they slept with the women. They are the same troops who tied me. I didn't see it because they kept me in another place and in the morning we heard the village head complain to their commander that his soldiers had slept with the women. They punished the soldiers, but they are still doing it.

Q: What do you think of the Burmese who came to your village? Do you think that they came to do good for the villagers?

A: They did not come to do any thing good for the villagers. They came to break the villagers. I do not feel good since the Burmese came to the village. I suffer always. I eat in the morning and have to think for the evening, then I eat in the evening and have to think for the morning. We have no food to eat and no money to pay the fees, and we could not suffer anymore. That's why we came here.

Interview: 31: Forced Labor, Forced Porters, Livelihood, IDP life, Arrest

Name: "Saw Baw"
Sex: male
Age: 29
Ethnicity: Karen
Religion: Buddhist/Animist
Marital Status: Married with one child aged 3
Address: Tee Law Thay village, T'Nay Hsah township, Karen State

Date of Interview: August 1999

Source: KHRG

[When interviewed "Saw Baw" had fled his village and was living in a group of internally displaced people at Tee Ner Hta, a vulnerable site near the border with Thailand. This site was later shelled by SPDC forces and the internally displaced villagers scattered.]

Q: How many days have you been at Tee Ner Hta?

A: We have slept here three nights already.

Q: Why did you come here?

A: Because we had problems, for example we couldn't pay what the Burmese demanded and also transportation - we couldn't go *[to the distant forced labour sites]*. *Der!!* They demanded that we go for *loh ah pay*, portering and chores like carrying water for them at their Battalion camp. It is not in Tee Law Thay Kee. It is between Meh Pleh and Thingan Nyi Naung. It is quite far away, but I never noticed how many hours because we went all the time.

Q: Did they ever come into the village?

A: They weren't staying in the village before I came, but if they entered the village and asked for pork the villagers had to give it. They usually came to the village every two or three days. Sometimes 100 of them came together.

Q: How many houses are in your village?

A: I've heard people say that it is 280 houses. The village head's name is B—. The villagers elected him to be village head.

Q: Do the Burmese collect porters from the village?

A: Yes, they ask the village head. They do not collect monthly but each person has to go for seven days. They collect three people per time.

Q: Do they cause problems for people who cannot go?

A: They do not trouble them but their brother or sister has to go for them. Or if they don't have anyone *[to go for them]*, people like that have to run away.

Q: Did you have to give the Burmese a rice quota?

A: During this last rainy season they were not provided with rice *[ration shipments]*, so they didn't have enough rice. Then they demanded rice from the villagers. They demanded it from the village head, and he had to give it to them because he was afraid of their guns. So the villagers had to give and then had to buy rice for themselves. One big tin costs 2,500 *kyat*.

Q: Could you earn your living by working on the fields?

A: I could support my family if we didn't need to fear them, and if they didn't disturb us. But

in this messy situation, I had no time to work.

Q: Did the Burmese ever destroy your field huts?

A: *Der!* They destroyed huts at B'Naw Kleh Kee already. In my village they didn't destroy them yet, but in the first year that the Ko Per Baw was founded [1995], they [DKBA] destroyed our huts and burned down our stacks of straw.

Q: Did you ever go to porter?

A: No, I ran to avoid them. We have to pay money if we dare not go, and if we can't give money we have to run. If we run we don't need to pay because the village head can't find us when we run into the mountains. People who live in the village have to give it, and the villagers who don't want to give have to run and stay in the mountains like my family. I had to run because I had no money to give, and we just didn't have enough money to buy food.

Q: Do they collect a monthly porter fee?

A: They collect it monthly from the whole village, and for each house it is 3,000 *kyat*. Even if you go you also have to pay.

Q: So all the villagers have to give whether they go for portering or not?

A: Yes, because it is not just for portering. For portering they also collect. Most people dare not go, so they also pay 3,000 or 4,000 *kyat* for seven days instead of going. They tell the village head to collect it. Then we use that money to hire our friends in the villages; it is not given to the Burmese.

Q: How long ago did you leave your village?

A: It is a long time ago, five years already. I stayed near T—, a three-hour walk from the village. But the Burmese couldn't see or find my hillfields and field huts easily. Mostly they pass by the huts which are along other pathways.

Q: When you lived in the village did you have to go for *loh ah pay*?

A: If the villagers run with their whole family, they don't need to go for *loh ah pay*. But if they captured us [*hiding in the fields*], they would kill us.

Q: Did you see them kill anyone?

A: No, I didn't see them kill anyone. I've seen them fire at people who ran when they approached, but no one got injured. One time they shot at the village children who were looking after the cattle in the hills, and they captured many children. It was around twenty people. There were children and women, some of whom were carrying their babies. They called them back to their Battalion and forced them to spend the night. Then they released them.

Q: Why did you decide to leave your area and come here?

A: I couldn't stay near my place because they are going to stir up our place. I heard them say that they are going to drive all the villagers out to the same place. They didn't tell us where or when they will drive us out, but they said that they would. They will gather and

force out all of the villagers that are living around Meh Pleh Toh. They will block every path that passes or goes through Meh Pleh Toh until nothing can move, even food and other things. I heard that they will make trouble for people who stay in the mountains, that especially if they see men they will kill them at once. Our village head alerted us. If they see them, they will shoot dead all villagers they come across.

Q: What do you think their aim is in doing this?

A: Their aim is to destroy our Karen nationals until we disappear. I heard this from the village head, who said it is because the Karen villagers who stay in the mountains and work the hillfields are all considered as their enemies. If they see women they rape them, and if they meet men they kill them. It is better to stay in the village but there is too much forced labour there. The village head told us, "If you cannot stay here anymore and need to go you can go, because there are people who will look after you". The Burmese don't come to do good things, only to destroy things. Now more often than ever they are coming to persecute and kill us. That's the reason we fled here.

Interview: 32: Extra-judicial Killing, Women minesweepers, Forced Porters, Forced Labor, Extortion, Livelihood

Name: "Naw Ther Paw"
Sex: Female
Age: not stated
Ethnicity: Karen
Occupation: Farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Marital Status: Widow, four children, the youngest aged 4
Address: T'Nay Hsah township, Karen State
Date of Interview: August 1999
Source: KHRG

Q: How long have you been here?

A: Just a little over two months. I came here in the rainy season. I fled in June or July.

Q: Why did you come here instead of staying in the village?

A: *Der!* We had to pay for portering but we couldn't pay, and we dared not go. Also the Ko Per Baw oppressed us and we couldn't do anything after my husband died. We faced many problems so we fled here.

Q: How did your husband die?

A: The Ko Per Baw shot him dead. They resented him because he worked to earn his living and so that his daughter could marry. But all the money disappeared when the Ko Per Baw came, which was before the wedding and the pork roast. They arrested and tortured him, so he ran up to the mountains and worked on the hill fields and his chillie field. One year later he was coming down from the fields and the Ko Per Baw shot him.

Q: Do you know the names of the people who shot him?

A: I knew the person who shot him very well. His name is Pa D—, and he is from K—. He stays with S—'s group [DKBA], which could be Maung Chit Thu's Battalion [Brigade #999]. S— disliked him so he called his soldiers to go as a group. They shot him near the village of T—. He was coming back alone from working in his hill field but he didn't know that the Burmese [*sic*: DKBA] were coming. They arrived at 10 a.m. in xxxx, and at 5 p.m they went to T—. The next morning they shot him dead.

Q: Why did S— dislike your husband

A: *Der!* Because he is a villager and they accused him of being a soldier. But he does not do anything, just ploughs the flat fields so he has enough to pay taxes. He was tied and beaten, and we still have a photo.

Q: Did the Ko Per Baw collect fees every month in the village?

A: Each month it was 2,000-3,000 *kyat* at the most, and at the least it was 400-500 *kyat*. It was more than 10,000 *kyat* per year. We couldn't pay them. Also we had to hire porters and people to go for *loh ah pay* for both the Burmese and the Ko Per Baw. We didn't have money to hire them every time, because it cost 2,000-3,000 *kyat*. We had to pay for porters and for their food. If they collected it you had to pay. You couldn't stay in the village without paying. All of our money was gone, and we sold our belongings so we had nothing. My husband would go for one or two days and carry as much as he could. Sometimes it was very far. He got yellow bean with rice to eat, but only one bowl and he was not full. This happened every time we went during the year. This situation frustrated us for more than 4four years. After we sold all our belongings we all had to run away and come here. I don't know what would happen if we still lived in the village, if they would kill us or not. But now a lot of people cannot pay them, and this year there is not enough rice or paddy either, so maybe the villagers will have to steal.

Q: Did you ever have to do any jobs for Ko Per Baw or the Burmese?

A: Oh!! We had to work for the Burmese. We planted and picked chillies in their garden. We also went far away and built a road near Tee Hsah Ra and Ko Ko. We built their camps and dug holes and did many other kinds of forced labour for 4-5 days. For the Ko Per Baw we had to dig ditches at their camp between K— and xxxx, at K—. We worked in the daytime and came home at night because it was nearby. They didn't give us anything [*money*] and they didn't feed us rice. They didn't give us water to drink, either. They were always very angry. If I look back on my life, this was the very worst time. It was disgusting.

Q: Did your husband have to porter for them when you ran out of money to pay the fees?

A: Yes. He had to carry everything: a basket of pots and bullets and shells. When he went for *loh ah pay* he had to carry rice and milk and their personal belongings. He usually had to go for one or two days.

Q: Were any porters beaten by the Burmese?

A: *Pwah!* A lot. The men cannot porter without being beaten. The Ko Per Baw beat everyone who was captured with my husband at the same time. The others were both from

xxxx and their names are S— and B—. They beat them severely until they couldn't take it anymore. *Pwai!!* They dropkicked one of them and bruised his face. One side of his face was discolored and his chin was swollen. They accused him of having guns and a radio, but he didn't do anything, he only worked in the fields. The village head went and tried to rescue them but could not. We went but they didn't look in our faces. After that they ordered us to bring 2 mattocks [*large hoes*] and people brought them. My husband, S—, dared not stay, so the next morning he escaped. He ran through an area where there are a lot of landmines, but he was lucky and did not step on one. They had put a lot of landmines in the ground.

A lot of women have to carry for the Burmese too. *Der!* Last year the Ko Per Baw forced women to go in front of them [*to step on landmines*] but the women didn't dare to go, so they forced the village head to go. He didn't dare to go either, but they pointed a gun at him and he had to. He went and he died. His name was P—. It happened at T— next to xxxx. His wife swore at them very badly. She still stays in the village and she wants to leave but can't because her children are so young.

Being a villager is the very worst because we have to feed both sides. You can't give to only one side, because if you give to just one, the other side hates you. If the Burmese force you, you have to go. If the Kaw Thoo Lei [*KNLA*] force you, you have to go. If DKBA forces you, you have to go. So it is the worst being a villager.

Q: Did the Burmese or DKBA ever steal anything from you, like food or belongings?

A: *Der!* They entered from the side of the village and if they couldn't get things by asking, they just stole it. In my house they came and ate. Also they took pots and spoons. They stole them; they didn't give me even one *Kyat*. They took all and we had to buy everything new. I was there but I didn't see them because they are very clever when they steal. After they've gone everything is lost, you don't have anything left. I didn't have any livestock so they didn't eat mine, but they ate other people's livestock a lot. They chased and shot every animal in the village.

There are people who scowl when they force us to work. It is not the same with people from this side [*KNU*]. I was sick of my troubles and problems that I faced and felt until now. Until I arrived here I faced many troubles and was poor. I was frustrated and I had to go to Mae Sot Hospital [*in Thailand*], and now I have to go again. A lot of villagers want to flee to come here because the Ko Per Baw and the Burmese demand a lot and the villagers can't give them any more. But they've heard that the refugee camp is closed, and that they won't let any more people in. If they didn't hear this, many people would come.

Q: Do you know the other people who have also fled here?

A: Yes, I know them. They are from xxxx [*her village*]. They couldn't pay either and were unhappy to stay. Naw L— is like me; her husband is dead and she couldn't stay with her child and still pay the taxes, so she came here.

Another woman: Her husband went to porter and the DKBA beat him, and when he returned he was sick and died because they had beaten him so hard.

A: They beat him while he was going to porter at Kway Sha. T—'s group beat him because they stay there and they are very rude. They beat him with everything they had, their feet as well as sticks. They forced him to keep going for so long, and they were not kind. They beat him wherever they wanted to; they kicked his sides, slapped and punched him until he

couldn't take it anymore.

Q: Are the Ko Per Baw still staying in your village?

A: The Ko Per Baw always stay there. T— didn't come back again but Maung H— still stays there. That group is a little bit better than T—'s group from K—. *Pwai!* T—'s group didn't care about any villagers who are non-military. When I was trying to find my husband, T— told me to go and find him for them, and if I couldn't find him he was going to kill me and my children and my mother. Myself, I thought if he wants to kill me then kill me. Being a villager is the very worst, so if he wants to kill me, go ahead. I would be happy to die.

Q: What did they do when they entered the village?

A: Ah! You don't need to know. They fired guns continuously and children were running and crying. They fired guns before they arrived in the village, and when they arrived on the hill they fired their guns, and when they entered the village they fired their guns again. They frightened all the women in the village, and they laughed at the women who ran with trembling feet. That is their manner and way of thinking.

Q: Did they ever beat any of the villagers?

A: *Der!* They beat my husband's cousin. They chased and captured him and stabbed him with a bayonet. Then they twisted it inside him and he yelled loudly because it was so painful. They accused him of having a gun and radio and making contact with T'Bee Met [*"closed-eyes"*, *DKBA slang for KNU/KNLA*], but he never had. All of the people they capture they beat a lot. The time they captured my husband they captured seven people and they slapped their faces until they were bruised. They accused them all of having guns and radios, so they interrogated and beat each of them in the fields. They tied them all and beat and kicked them. Later they released them all because people gave guarantees for them. I was very afraid and my feet were trembling, and I was so afraid that I couldn't go to guarantee him [*her husband*]. But I had to go to give the guarantee because they kept telling me that they were going to kill him. They said that he and his cousin, B—, were most at fault.

Q: Did they shoot any villagers?

A: The Ko Per Baw went and shot Po G—, his wife, and Maung N—'s uncle. I heard that the Ko Per Baw who shot him were named Pa T—, Pa D—, and Maung P—. All of them were Ko Per Baw but the Burmese were also involved because many of them went along. They shot both of them [*Po G— and wife*] as well as P—. Even now he can't walk well and still has pain.

Q: What are the villagers who remain doing?

A: A lot of people in xxxx want to leave the village. If they leave they have to go secretly, because if they [*the Burmese*] know people want to go, they stop them so that no one dares to go.

Q: Is it better for you since you came here?

A: When we arrived here it became better because we were not in fear and could sleep

until the sun came up. We don't have enough food yet because we are new arrivals, but if we stay long enough we will get enough to eat. When I arrived, if K— had not taken care of me I would be dead by now.

Interview: 33: Forced Relocation, Forced Labor, Forced Porters, Rape, Looting, livelihood, Prohibited from entering Thailand as refugee

Name: "Taw Lay"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 41
 Ethnicity: Karen
 Religion: Buddhist
 Occupation: Farmer
 Marital Status: Married with three children aged 5-14
 Address: Kwih Lay village, T'Nay Hsah township, Karen State
 Date of Interview: September 1999

[When interviewed at the end of September 1999, "Taw Lay" had fled his village to the Thai border but could not cross because Thai troops were not allowing new arrivals, so he was living with a group of displaced people on the Burma side of the border.]

Q: When did you arrive here at xxxx? *[the camp of internally displaced people on the Burma side of the border with Thailand]*

A: I arrived here at least three weeks ago, before 9-9-99, but I can't remember exactly.

Q: What happened in your village that persuaded you to flee here?

A: The Burmese Army came to our village and said they were going to force us to Ker Ghaw. They did not give us a deadline to move, but it looked like we would have to start moving by the next morning. On that night my family left our village. We did not want to go to Ker Ghaw because the Burmese told us our village was small *[i.e. remote]* so we couldn't go for forced labour every month. They wanted our whole village to stay in Ker Ghaw to be closer to their camp.

Q: Which Battalion came to the village and told you they would drive you to Ker Ghaw?

A: LIB 207, more than 100 soldiers. They were a new group that came to the camp, and they patrol like a mobile column. Usually IB 118 stays in the camp, but this one came from the lowlands.

Q: What happened to the other families in the village?

A: When I left the village in the evening the whole village hadn't moved yet, but the next morning the whole village was planning to move. There were 51 families in the village. After the Burmese told them to move, the village heads talked to them and I heard that the villagers came back to the village. I don't know the situation there now, but I heard that the Burmese have talked to the village head, M—.

Q: Which villages do they plan to relocate, and where will they move to?

A: In the beginning they told us that Kwih Lay, Pah Klu, and Taw Oak will move to Ker Ghaw, and the other villages of Thay K'Dtee, Thu Kee and Loh Baw would move to Tee Wah Blaw. I heard that they will move them so that they can guard them, and they will order the villagers to reap the paddy and give it all to them. But they have not moved yet. I am not sure, but I heard that people came back and stay in Kwih Lay again because the village head and the monks discussed it with the Burmese.

Q: What will the villagers who do not want to relocate to Ker Ghaw do?

A: *Der!* They told us that they will move all of us and that the people who do not want to go will be forced. They said that our village is too small to be able to afford porters and forced labour like big villages. Before they moved us, though, a battle occurred between Ker Ghaw and Kwih Lay. They forced villagers to carry their injured, then they detained them and kept them one night in the cell. They collected some villagers from Ker Ghaw, and five villagers from Kwih Lay to carry their wounded. Their names are M—, who is around 20 years old, K— who is around 30 years old, A— who is 20, M— who is 20, and P— who is around 40. There were 6 Burmese soldiers who were wounded and four who died.

Q: Did the Burmese ever enter your village before?

A: Yes, the Army stayed in Ker Ghaw and came to our village sometimes. Usually when they entered the village they were looking for the village head to demand villagers for *loh ah pay* and portering. Sometimes they demanded porters for one month, sometimes for five days and sometimes for one week. Then the village head had to arrange for the porters. They usually gathered 3-5 people from our small village and if they demand three people for a week, three people have to go. The villagers went to porter because we dared not disobey. If you did not go you had to pay money: 2,500 *Kyat* for five days, or 500 *Kyat* per day. I had to porter four times already during this rainy season when people started working in the fields, and I also had to pay money when I could not go.

Q: What did you have to do when you went to porter?

A: One time the Burmese were going from Ker Ghaw to Pah Klu and I had to carry bullets, shells, and rations for them. They forced us to carry five shells each, and they weigh more than 10 *viss* [16 kg/35 lb]. I carried it because I was afraid. There were three of us from Kwih Lay and around 40-50 villagers from Thay K'Dtee, Toh Thu Kee, and Ker Ghaw. We had to walk two days and sleep at Pah Klu for the whole month [*they had to make repeated two-day trips throughout the month and stay at the Pah Klu Army Camp*]. We had to carry our own food, but it was not enough food for me. They fed us only one bowl of rice mixed with yellow beans, which smelled very bad because they boiled it in plastic overnight. They never let us rest while we carried, and sometimes they beat the porters. One time in Pah Klu I saw them do this to one of the porters whom I knew from T— village, named Maung A—. He dared not cross the river with his load, so the soldiers kicked him and he fell into the river. When he came back to the bank of the river on the side where the soldiers were, they kicked him again. They were from LIB 120 under Column Commander Than Aung and Company Commander Saw Toe Aung.

Q: What were the living conditions like for the porters at Pah Klu?

A: We slept under the school building at Pah Klu and they guarded us during the night. If we got sick, they didn't care for us. The village head arranged for us to porter in turns, so when your time was up people took your place. That is why no one died on that trip.

Q: Who had to go for *loh ah pay* in your village?

A: If the village is small they collect more than 10 people for *loh ah pay*, but if it is a big village they collect about 30 people. The village head calls for one person from each house. In our village the women have to go too. My wife had to carry water for the soldiers when they needed it. Even children as young as 7 had to carry water and small things over the short distance between Kwih Lay and Ker Ghaw. They made people as old as 50, with grey hair, porter too. All of us had to carry their loads of rice, milk, pepper, salt, and other food to Meh Pleh. Sometimes we would go for the day, but sometimes we couldn't come back in one day so we had to sleep there also. We also had to bring our own food because they didn't feed us enough. The soldiers forced us to build their camp, dig their bunkers, and make fences.

Q: How many days did you usually have to go for *loh ah pay*?

A: When we arrived we worked until midday, then we took a rest and started to work again in the afternoon. If they demanded us for five days, we had to sleep there at their camp in Ker Ghaw.

Q: Did the soldiers ever loot your livestock when they entered the village?

A: Yes. I was with them when they entered Pah Klu village, and their Company Commander Saw Toe Aung and his column ate a lot of pigs, goats, and chickens. The Privates chased down and shot about 30 pigs to eat, and to dry the meat so they could carry it later. They didn't pay for it, they just ate it.

Q: Did they ever eat your livestock?

A: Yes, they looted in my village also. They caught my chickens and ate one of my pigs that weighed over ten *viss* [16 kg/35 lb]. They asked me for a pig, but I said "I have only one pig, so I can't give it to you". Then they said that they had arrived without anything to eat, so they shot and ate it. The village head, T—, went and complained to them, but they did not give us money for that.

Q: Which Battalion was it that shot your pig?

A: I know they are LIB 207. They slept in our village.

Q: Do the soldiers ever try to sleep with women in the village?

A: Yes, in xxxx the village headwoman named xxxx always has to go and sleep with Saw Toe Aung. She is about 50 years old.

Q: Do they have sex?

A: *Der!* They would have sex because she has to go and sleep with him in his bed and there are just the two of them that sleep in the same place. If he calls her to sleep with him, she always has to go.

Q: Have any villagers been killed by the Burmese?

A: At the time when they entered Pah Klu while I was with them as a porter, I heard that they killed a villager from Pah Klu named Du Lay Loh. People said that he was angry because he found out that they had raped his wife, who is mute. The Burmese called him outside and killed him. He was maybe 40 years old. His wife's name is Naw Mu Ga and she has no children. They didn't compensate her for his death; they did nothing and gave her nothing.

Q: When you worked the wet paddy field in your village, was it enough for you?

A: When I was working my wet paddy field we could plant 4 baskets of paddy, so if we had a good rainy season we got 200 baskets of paddy and it was enough. We had to give to the Burmese when they entered the village if they demanded rice. If they arrived and their food was gone, they demanded food from the villagers and we had to give it.

Q: Do you have a quota that you have to give to them every year?

A: This year they announced that the government will gather all the paddy that we get from the fields, and then we have to go and buy it from the government. According to them, Pah Klu and Kwih Lay are ruled by them so they have the power to do this. For example, if the villagers would sell each other a basket of rice for 500 *kyat*, we will have to buy it from them for 250 *kyat* [*i.e. the SPDC will force them to pay half of market price to get their own rice back*].

Q: Do you have to pay other fees for *loh ah pay* or for portering?

A: For *loh ah pay* and portering they demand 2 villagers from each village or 20,000 *kyat* per month [*in addition to other forced labour demands*]. This is every month, and if you don't send the money you have to go yourself. Usually people from our village and Thay K'Dtee give money because people dare not go, but we know villagers in Kwih Lay who went because they didn't have money to give. You had to stay at their camp and carry their baskets and loads by their side.

Q: Are there any landmines around your village?

A: In Taw Oak the DKBA set up a lot of landmines at the top of the village and beside the bank of the river. Just two months ago two women stepped on landmines when they were going fishing. One of them named Nga Bla Ree died; she was about 30 years old. The other one lost her leg; her name is Y— and she is over 30. She still stays in the village. Her brother came here and said that they didn't take the pieces of shell out of her leg, and no one sent her anywhere.

Q: Why did they set up landmines near the village?

A: I don't know what their aim is and I can't guess.

Q: Did many villagers flee the village and come with you here?

A: Before I came here I heard a lot of villagers discussing coming here. At the time when I fled and came here I came with one family from Pah Klu. Now they are staying on the other side of the Moei River [*in Thailand*], and they earn money by hiring themselves out

for daily work.

Q: What are your main reasons for fleeing?

A: They have guns but we do not have guns, so we cannot defeat them. They have guns so they forced us to work whether we wanted to or not. Even if we didn't want to leave we had to leave, because we couldn't tolerate it anymore. I am very upset. We are farmers and we work in our paddy fields; if we were allowed to we would only work in our fields.

Q: Would you like to go a refugee camp?

A: I will go. First we thought that we would go to the camp, but we heard that the Thais do not allow people to go to the camp, so we would have to stay here. We stayed like this for a while and some westerners came and took our photos and then sent us one month ration.

Q: Would you like to go back to your village?

A: Yes, I will go back if we have peace there, but now I can't go back and I dare not.

Interview: 34 :Extra-judicial killing, Extortion, Forced Labor, Forced porters, Looting

Name:	“Naw Paw Htoo”
Sex:	Female
Age:	27
Ethnicity:	Karen
Religion:	Christian
Occupation:	farmer
Marital Status:	Married with one child aged 6
Address:	Taw Oak village, T’Nay Hsah township, Karen State
Date of Interview:	September 1999
Source:	KHRG

[When interviewed at the end of September 1999, “Naw Paw Htoo” had fled her village to the Thai border but could not cross because Thai troops were not allowing new arrivals, so she was living with a group of displaced people on the Burma side of the border.]

Q: Can you tell me why you came here?

A: Because when we were staying there we couldn't meet their demands, and also it was difficult for us to get enough food. We fled here to hire ourselves out and to stay with our parents.

Q: Do you have any relatives still staying in Taw Oak?

A: One of my aunts was still staying in Taw Oak, but she went down to stay at xxxx. She wants to come but she can't because her mother's legs are in pain and the Burmese shot and killed her husband. My aunt has 3 children and when we fled here she said that they will come, but they have not come yet.

Q: Why did the Burmese kill her husband?

A: He went into the forest to find some vegetables to eat, but he didn't know that the Burmese [*LIB 331*] were staying along the path waiting for them, so he went down to enter the village and when the Burmese saw him and his friend, they shot the two of them dead. My uncle's name was Per Ta Lu and he was 32 years old. His friend was Pa Mu Dah, who was only 15 years old.

Q: How did you know that they had shot them?

A: We knew it because they came carrying their bodies in blankets and bags. They said that they made a mistake by shooting them, but they were dead already, and these dead people were villagers. They were carrying vegetables when the soldiers shot them dead. They did not accuse anyone of anything because they had not shot Kaw Thoo Lei [*KNLA*], they had shot villagers.

Q: What type of things did the Burmese demand from you in the village?

A: *Ah hoi!* They came and looted money from us. The Burmese collected money for their ration and after that they ate it. They collect fees for portering, *loh ah pay*, and other charges. Our village is small with only 30 houses, so they collect over 20,000 *kyat* per month, but that is only enough for porters' fees so they charge for other things too, like *loh ah pay*. It is a lot. They come and collect it once a month, usually 25,000 *kyat*.

Q: Do you have a village head in Taw Oak?

A: Before we had one, but now I think that the village head ran away already. The village head always changes once a year. The villagers elected *xxxx*.

Q: How many people did they collect for *loh ah pay*, and what did people usually have to do?

A: For *loh ah pay* they demanded people once a week, sometimes for 5-6 days at a time. Sometimes it was five or ten villagers who had to go at a time, then others would replace them. If they [*the soldiers*] were staying nearby and if there were many of them, it was once a week, but if they went back [*to their main bases*] it got better. They have camps at Meh Pleh and Kway Sha and come up to stay in our village sometimes. They are Battalion 331, there could be 300-500 soldiers because when they came there were so many in the village and outside the village, too.

Q: Did they collect fees if people couldn't go for *loh ah pay*?

A: *Der!* All of the villagers have to give, and the people who can't give have to sell their rice and paddy to give money to them. Each family has to hire someone for 1,000 *kyat* or more per time; some families have to give 2,000 *kyat*. They don't care about young or old people; young and old all have to go. They force children as young as 10, and some people who go are 50-60 and have grey hair already. Some people who went came back and told us that they hadn't eaten for 4-5 days. As for me, I was afraid and I didn't go, also because I am a woman and mostly men go. In our village other women have gone, but I never went.

Q: Did they ever beat people who went to work for them?

A: Yes, we had people who were beaten by them a lot. They beat P— when he went to carry for them for *loh ah pay* and portering. They beat and kicked him because he didn't have enough food and couldn't follow them. The soldiers get good enough food so they can walk quickly, but he had to carry a lot of bullets in a basket that weighed about 20-30 *viss* [32-48 kg/70-105 lb].

Q: Did any villagers die while portering?

A: Yes, we had one villager from our village who died, but I don't know his name.

Q: What do they do when they enter the village?

A: When they enter the village they eat pigs and hens, and they come and steal all the villager's belongings. They don't ask for it, and if they ask the owner and the owner doesn't give it to them they kill it for themselves and nobody dares to complain. If you talk back to them they point their guns at you. They ate one of my hens but I dared not say anything to them. I stayed quiet, and their commanders also scolded us the way they do. *Der!* The privates and their commanders eat together. They eat the villagers' pigs and chickens and they don't pay for it.

Q: What about the villagers' rice?

A: They demand and collect one big tin of paddy, and if people don't give them one big tin they have to give half of one. If the villagers don't give at all they step into the house to get it and pound it. Under the house villagers have a big mortar [*a large wooden bowl for pounding rice; the pounder is attached to a log levered in the centre, operated by stepping on and off the opposite end*]. They pound it by themselves and we dare not say anything. I don't know if they have their own rice or not, but they loot it from the villagers and pound it themselves.

Q: Have they beaten any villagers in Taw Oak?

A: Yes, they beat and tortured a villager named P—, who is around 30 years old. The commander ordered it and the privates beat him. They accused him of being Kaw Thoo Lei [*KNLA*] and working with them. He was never Kaw Thoo Lei, and he told them that but they did not accept it, so they sliced his ears. They beat him horribly with a stick in the village, and we dared not go to look because we were staying outside the village. Now he is not strong enough to carry anything.

Q: Have they ever killed any villagers, besides the ones who died while portering?

A: Yes, I have just two brothers and two sisters and one of my brothers was shot to death by the Burmese. They killed him in April 1997. At the time he didn't know that the Burmese were waiting on the way, so he was coming back to the village with his friends and some children. One child's leg had been broken and she walked slowly, so they were still walking late at night. They were coming back at night and the Burmese were staying along the path through the mountains. The Burmese shot at them and two of them died. The other one's name was Naw K'Nu [*a woman*]. All in all there were more than ten people with them: Naw K'Nu, her husband, their children, my brother, and three of his friends. The Burmese

captured all of them after they shot the two.

The Burmese didn't say anything afterwards, because they couldn't do anything since he was shot already. Maybe they could have done something, but the Burmese are like that - they shoot first and think later, and you can't bring people back to life. After the people ran away, they took the belongings that they had left. My brother's friend was with his wife, and she was shot. They took all the woman's belongings, like shirts, clothing, pots, and other things.

Q: What happened to the people they captured?

A: They captured them and beat them while they interrogated them because they had been coming back at night. Then they took them to Thay K'Yah, and after that they released all of them, including the three children.

Q: Did your brother have a family?

A: Yes, he had one child but it died. Now his wife has gone to stay in *xxxx [refugee]* camp. My brother was 21 years old when he died.

Q: What happened to the family of the woman who was killed, Naw K'Nu?

A: Her husband was there too, and after she was dead for a year her husband was arrested by the Burmese again and they killed him, too. Now one of their children stays with her grandmother at *xxxx*, and another stays in *xxxx [refugee camp]*, but the youngest one died of illness. After the child was dead, the Burmese arrested their father [*Naw K'Nu's husband*] and killed him. His name was Maung Thaw Pay and he was 35 or 36 years old. He died two years ago, at the same time that the Burmese killed my uncle.

Q: Why did the Burmese kill your uncle?

A: They accused him of being this and that, but he was not anything. The Burmese had already shot and killed his wife. They shot him and then they beat him to death.

Q: Did you also have Ko Per Baw [*DKBA*] in your village?

A: When I left my village the Ko Per Baw were not in the village, but after I fled here people said that they came and stayed there.

Q: How many families in Taw Oak have fled and come here?

A: I don't know right now how many [*Taw Oak*] families are staying here, but I think around 10-15. Many people are fleeing to come here continuously. We are many families, some stay here and some went to stay at *xxxx [refugee camp]*.

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: I arrived on the May 13[1999]. I left the village when the Burmese weren't in the village, because they don't like us to go out and they don't allow it. We fled secretly. I slept two nights along the way. We had to cross the main road of the Burmese and look carefully as we went.

Q: Now are you having problems with the Thais at xxxx [*across the river on the Thai side of the border*]?

A: Just recently people told us that the Thais would come and drive us out and we had to run. I was staying on the other side of the river [*in Thailand*] to hire myself out for money. I get 50 or 60 Baht per day to buy rice to eat. But somebody told us to run from the Thai soldiers, so we had to run back here [*to the Burma side of the river*]. It was on the 15th or 16th of August when they said that we were illegals and had to move.

Q: Why did they ask you to leave?

A: I don't know, they just told us that because a lot of people had fled there [*to Thailand*] it was causing trouble, and they ordered the villagers to move back. They came and stayed for 3-4 days, and when they left we went back, too. They don't want us to stay there. When we first arrived back there they didn't know about us, but after a while more and more of our friends came. Now they know about it, so they drove us back here again because a lot of people came to stay there. They said it is messy so we had to move. They said, "Don't come and stay here for a long time" because it is their land.

Q: Did you get food from anyone since you've been here?

A: Some people [*foreign relief organisations*] came and provided a rice ration for us twice already.

Q: What is your decision? Will you stay here or go to the camp?

A: *Der!* It is up to my community where we will go. We will stay here and go across [*to Thailand*] to work and earn money like this, and if they come we will run back here, and come and go like that.

Q: Do you know of anyone who has gone into the refugee camp?

A: At the time when I arrived here none of the people who came with us went to the refugee camp.

Q: What about the first group that arrived?

A: Yes, they went to the camp, but we haven't heard about them yet.

Q: Are you worried about the Burmese Army coming through here?

A: *Der!* We have to think about it whether we stay here or not! We will have to worry in the dry season [*starting in November*]. If the situation is not better by then we will run again, but I don't know where to run to.

Interview: 35: Forced Porters, Human Minesweepers, Beating, Looting

Name: "Pu Than Nyunt"
Sex: Male
Age: 55
Ethnicity: Karen
Religion: Animist

Occupation: farmer
Marital Status: Married with six children
Address: B’Nweh Pu village, Dta Greh township, Karen State
Date of Interview: September 1999
Source: KHRG

Q: Why did you leave your village?

A: We fled because the Burmese tortured us and forced us [*to do things*]. The Burmese were staying in Tee Wah and ordered us to go there, and when we arrived they grabbed us and pulled us to go along with them. There were a lot of people and we told them we dared not go to the landmine areas. Then they started to beat us.

Q: Do you know the unit number of the troops that beat you?

A: I don’t know because this group of Burmese were new arrivals and they replaced the other ones very recently. Their Commander is named Aung Aung; he is the Company Commander but I don’t know the Battalion.

Q: Where did they beat you?

A: He slapped me once on my face and pushed my chest once, then he hit the back of my neck and knocked me down. After I stood up he grabbed me again but he didn’t beat me.

Q: Why did he beat you?

A: *Der!* He beat us because they ordered us to walk through the landmines, but we dared not cross there. They told us to go in front of them, but we dared not go. But they would shoot or kill us somehow [*if they didn’t*], so we were afraid and ran away. There was a Burmese soldier who can speak Karen very well named Maung Nyo, he used to be a Karen soldier before he went and joined the *Tatmadaw [SPDC Army]*. He said that if people came along the paths at night, they would shoot all of them dead. L— told us about that.

Q: Did you ever have to porter for the Burmese?

A: I always had to before. I carried bullets and shells when they patrolled Wah Mi Klah, then went back to Tee K’Haw, then came to this area along the path to Ler Pu. They collected five men per village and after three days we were replaced. It [*his load*] must have been over 10 viss [*16 kg / 35 lb*], at least four 78 shells and six 81 shells [*78 mm and 81 mm shells, for the 3-inch and 81mm mortars respectively*]. I carried the same weight as one basket of rice. They didn’t give us anything and they told us that they would torture us until we break while we tried to earn our living. And they do it like that by turn. They abuse us in every way.

Q: Did they ever beat any of the porters?

A: I didn’t see that when I was there, but they slapped our faces.

Q: Did they feed you enough food?

A: *Der!* At first they fed us enough food like they ate. And if we slept in a house we had a good place to sleep. They didn’t guard us because they were close to the people [*the*

previous group of soldiers had a decent relationship with the villagers], but the other group that replaced them treated us like dogs. They beat two people. They tried to force them to be messengers but they wouldn't go.

Q: Can you give them money instead of going?

A: You can't give the Burmese money for that, and people always have to go in person. Sometimes they ate pigs or goats and villagers had to reimburse [*the owners*] for that.

Q: Did they collect money from the villagers?

A: Recently they did not collect money, but in the past they asked the village head to collect for them because there were a lot of people. Each house had to give 30-40, sometimes even 50 *Kyat*. We had to pay for them to eat. They took chickens from people who had them, and every time they arrived they asked [*for livestock*] and people had to give. Sometimes they asked, but sometimes they shot them to eat. They didn't pay for it. They took them to their commander.

Q: Did they eat other things in the village?

A: Paddy and rice. They demanded it often and we always had to give. Last year we had only a small amount of paddy and rice [*the crop was very bad*]. For every basket or big tin of rice we ate, they looted one basket or big tin. We had to collect rice for them too, and Pa N— from the Ko Per Baw told me to complain to them so I did, but they didn't respond. He said that they would give it back to us because he is the one who takes care of their rations, but they gave us nothing. I know that the name of the chief commander of the Burmese is Pu P'Na Wah, and he has to send rations to all the soldiers, including the Ko Per Baw.

Q: Did they take any other belongings of the villagers?

A: They took everything that they saw, like gallon jugs and containers and as much as they could carry. Someone from Gkah Deh said, "They are like gorillas, even if they see pumpkins or pumpkin leaf they take it, and if they see just one aubergine they take it and put it in their basket and you can't keep it." Even if they saw half a knife [*a broken machete*] they would take it. Just recently they went and took O—'s saw, and when he went and asked for it back the Burmese pushed his chest with the butt of a pistol and slapped him once on the face. But the Ko Per Baw don't take people's belongings like that. After I fled our belongings like pots were left in the house, so I think they are already lost. They ate two or three of my chickens. Sometimes they asked us but sometimes not. Some privates are disobedient and stupid, and they eat everything unlike the commanders. Mostly the commanders ask before they eat.

Q: Did the Ko Per Baw and the Burmese cooperate to abuse the villagers?

A: Ko Per Baw soldiers were not involved with the Burmese this past hot season [*March-May 1999*]. But during the time when they came and beat people the Ko Per Baw were involved with them. Not one of the Ko Per Baw opened their mouths when they saw the Burmese beating people and shooting people dead.

One evening more than 30 Burmese came to Paw Gaw Ko with four Ko Per Baw soldiers. They stayed at Law Mi Kyo for one night, and there was one company with ten

soldiers staying in B’Nweh Pu. They surrounded my daughter’s house where I was sleeping, and they interrogated us about whether any Kaw Thoo Lei [*KNU/KNLA*] were there and if they had laid landmines. The Ko Per Baw were angry and threatened us that they would come and shoot into our wives’ vaginas. They met with seven people. The youngest child was 6 or 7 years old. They released them before sunset, and they released me last. They made me follow them to Paw Gaw Ko, and they pulled S—’s parents to Tee K’Haw. First they told us that they would have a meeting and they told Saw K—’s father and I to “go and listen to the meeting”. But they did not have the meeting that night, and they asked us to sleep for a while. Then they told us, “Move, move! We will go back to the house.” But the Burmese did not go to our house. They went to the mountains and we had to go in the night through the bush and scrub, and we carried as we walked. *Der!* They did not feed us rice. After they released me I ran away because I dared not stay, because if I stayed longer the situation would have become worse.

Q: Did they force children to carry for them?

A: The children are so small that they did not force them. Mostly they forced people aged 20-30 like B— and K—. They forced people to carry loads of rice often from Taw Naw Ko down to Ka Teh. It took one day of walking, and then we slept one night there and came back. All of the porters were men. When we had to carry their rations it was not just for one day, and we had to carry them from the car road. They did not pay us. They did not feed us either, so people who couldn’t go without food had to take some rice with them.

They forced porters to build their huts and gardens at Wah Mi Klah. People also cut trees and bamboo and dug bunkers or trenches and built small huts for a camp. The porters were mostly from B’Nweh Pu and Meh La Kee. Just a few were from Meh La Hta. We went for three days and then rotated.

Q: Where did you sleep when you had to porter?

A: At their place there is a big monastery where all the people slept. They had sentries for security, but not to watch workers. I don’t know what they would do if we escaped. They would probably fine us. If people didn’t finish their three days, they were fined. They fined us 2 or 3 *viss* of chicken or pork. People had to give this because all of us were afraid. When they forced us to work sometimes they would slap our faces and we couldn’t do anything, like K— from Meh La Kee who had his face slapped twice. As for me, he hit me once here, another time there, and twice he pushed me hard so I fell down. I was carrying a backpack, and he grabbed the backpack and pushed as strongly as he could. *Der!* He beat me because they forced us to walk and show the way but we dared not go in front of them. People had planted landmines there! I told him that people said there are landmines there, so we dared not go there anymore. If we lost our legs, we would have nothing. One of my son’s legs was blown off by a landmine. It was a Ko Per Baw landmine that had been planted a few years ago. But the soldiers only said that some people had warned us, so why were we so afraid? But they dared not go either, because they worried that their own legs would be blown off. I dared not go, but they went step by step. We thought it would be suicide to go like that. If I stepped on a landmine, maybe I would die or my legs would be blown off, so my life would be useless.

Q: When did this happen?

A: Just one month ago. After they beat me I ran here.

Interview: 36: IDP life, Forced Labor, Extortion, Rape, Landmines, Livelihood

Name: "Naw Hsah Paw"
Sex: Female
Age: 47
Ethnicity: Karen
Religion: Buddhist
Occupation: farmer
Marital Status: Married with two sons and two daughters aged 4-18
Address: xxxx village, T'Nay Hsah township, Karen State
Date of Interview: November 1999
Place of Interview: In hiding near her home village
Source: KHRG

Q: How many times have the Burmese soldiers come to your village?

A: Ah! How could I count? This year they always come, but they just enter and go out again. Last year they set up their camp there and we had to carry water for them. Those troops were IB 116, and we had to carry water and find firewood for them until we were nearly dead. Their commander is Lah Thin, and the Battalion Commander is U Lat Aung. Their Division is from Mandalay, but I can't remember which Division it is. Usually there are about 70 soldiers in their camp. The Battalion Commander who beats people a lot is A—. He beat the village head of T— [*village*] named Pa M—, and we heard he also beat a longtail boat driver named S—, Saw A— from Sghaw Ko, and K— when he was carrying things by longtail boat, and many other people. He beat and abused a lot of villagers.

Q: Did Commander A— do anything else?

A: Later he took all the porter fee money [*for himself*]. I would guess that all that money collected by all the [*Army*] groups would have been 70,000 *kyat* during the 3 months that he was staying in the camp. For each month our village had to give 14,000 *kyat* for each of two people [*to not send two porters*], so we gave them 70,000 *kyat* in three months. He took the money from every village. Our village is small, he demanded more from the bigger villages. From Ker Ghaw he collected for 6 people [*porters*] at 12,000 *kyat* each, 6 people from Tee Wah Blaw, six from Tee Law Thay and six from Sghaw Ko tract, all at 12,000 each. He just took money, not people [*he didn't want the porters, it was just an excuse to demand money; in total, the 5 villages listed had to pay a total of 316,000 kyat per month for 'porter fees' alone, not counting other fees*]. There are other village tracts too, like Pah Klu tract, Loh Baw, Meh Pleh Wah and so on as far as Tee Wah Klay and Day Law Pya. He also beat people, and a lot of villagers from our village ran away.

Q: What did he say when he beat people?

A: He said that people didn't listen to him when he asked for porters. He demanded porters

[*in addition to the fees*] but how could you find them for him right away like that? He should specify a date and time for us. Not all the village heads arrived together [*when called to supply porters*], only Pa xxxx and Daw xxxx, so he beat Pa xxxx and he fell at the foot of the mango trees. Daw xxxx told him “Captain, don’t do that, he’s not a new Chairperson, he has been Village Chairperson for a long time. Why do you treat him like this?” And he shouted at her, “You don’t need to tell me, Mother!” Later he said to her, “I argued with you under the mango trees, Mother”, and she said, “I can’t forget that because you were wrong, but we can’t do anything because we have no horns so you can do to us as you please”.

Q: Did he ever capture people as porters?

A: Yes, they captured people a lot. Sometimes he demanded ten people or thirty people from each village, took the money for that all for himself and then still called for *loh ah pay*. He demanded people as well as money. Sometimes when they were going to patrol to Meh Pleh and come back he took more than 10 villagers from our village.

Q: Did he ever eat the villagers’ chickens or pigs?

A: The village heads of all the village tracts had to kill a pig for him once every four days [*by rotation*]. That group never runs out of pork in their camp. When they were staying in the camp we had to send them 20 *viss* [*32 kg / 70 lb*] of pork every 4 days.

Q: Did they ever try to rape women in your village?

A: Not in our village, but we heard that Battalion IB 120 from Moh Ta Ma near Moulmein came and raped women in Taw Oak. Those troops shit into people’s mortars [*for pounding paddy*] and cookpots. There were a lot of people who had to face this in Pah Klu; the married women there said that you dared not open your cookpots because they were full of shit, and so were their [*rice container*] tins.

Q: Do you know the name of their commander?

A: I don’t know because they didn’t stay in our village, they just came and stayed one night and I said to him, “Son, don’t shit in our mortars.” He asked me, “Where did you hear that?” and I told him, “I heard from Meh Pleh that you shit in their mortars.” A lot of Meh Pleh villagers ran to escape, and Naw P— told me “When they are drunk they come into your house with no shirts or pants on, and my husband was running around and my children were crying loudly”. People wanted to go and report all this to the Division, but the Meh Pleh camp commander wouldn’t allow it.

Q: Is it just their ordinary soldiers who do these things?

A: Both their leaders and their private soldiers do it, because their leaders are no good and it is like rain dripping down from the roof of the house [*the example of the officers trickles down to the men*]. People say “When the head goes, the tail is pulled along” [*a Karen proverb*]. I told them we would go to their battalion base at Moh Ta Ma to do our own shit, and I told them, “You have very rude habits! You should know a toilet, can’t you tell a toilet from a mortar or a cookpot?” He said, “Mother, who told you this?” I told him I heard it when I was in Meh Pleh, and all the married women in Pah Klu were also talking about it.

They did it in Pah Klu just for spite.

Q: Do they do things like that in your village?

A: They don't do stupid things like that in our village because we dare to stand up to them. Whether it's the right time or not we tell them straight, and we go to meet them before they do stupid things so they can't do it.

Q: Did any of the troops ever make you build roads or other things?

A: U xxxx [*#xxx Battalion*] ordered us to build a motor road between Ker Ghaw and Kwih Lay, but the headwoman told him, "I won't walk on this road so I don't want to do it, because we would need petrol to use it. If you want to use it, come and build it yourself", and they came and built it themselves. Some villagers had to do work for them clearing the road and cutting the scrub.

Q: When the villagers were working for them did they provide food?"

A: Aye!! When we were building their camp we had to take our own food, our own rice and our own water. They forced us to work and we had no time to rest.

Her husband: Each day someone has to go for *set tha* [*messenger labour*] and has to sleep there. We had to build a small hut and sleep alone there.

A: Yes, men have to sleep there in the camp.

Q: Do you want to talk about any other problems in your village?

A: I couldn't tell about all the torture we have suffered since the [*SPDC*] camp was set up and the Ko Per Baw was founded. At first people said that if the Ko Per Baw arrived in the village there would be no more taxes, so we hoped they would come. Oh my Lord! All of our cows and bullocks were already gone. When the Burmese enter the village they are like the wildcats who clap their hands while the forest is burning [*because it flushes out the prey*]. If they want a handspan, they demand an armspan. So I told them, "Der! Son, when I was staying down in the town, each Battalion and Division that was going to go up patrolling at the frontline was given fees to pay porters and rations for porters. But now you come and demand it all from us, so how can we survive because we don't even have enough for ourselves?" Then he said "What can I tell you, Mother?" Even if we don't have enough food for ourselves, if they demand food we have to give it to them and we can't do anything.

Q: Do the Ko Per Baw help at all?

A: They can't do anything, and if we ask them they say, "Our footprints are not as big as theirs and we don't dare rebuke them strongly for that". So they just deal with them gently and softly.

Q: How do the Ko Per Baw treat the villagers?

A: They don't beat us, and if they get angry and scold us we dare to talk back to them, because they are our own nationality, whether they are big shots or small fry. But before we had [*DKBA commander*] Moe Kyo, and he was more rude than all the others. When he was staying in the village he burned down our stocks of straw, and he laid landmines and our villagers had their legs blown off. Po Hla Paw lost his leg to one of Moe Kyo's mines, and

Saw Kho stepped on one but his leg was not blown off. He didn't dare beat our villagers, but we heard that he beat people in other villages.

Her husband: In Ker Ghaw, when he gave an order he wanted people to come at once, and if they didn't arrive at once he fired a machine gun.

A: *Der!* The houses were full of holes.

Her husband: So people didn't dare stay, some fled the village and fled up and down.

Q: Where is Moe Kyo now?

A: People told me that he stepped on a landmine at Paw Mo Baw, and some said that he died but others say not yet. I was very happy when I heard that he was dead, but when some people said that he is alive and they saw him I thought, "Ah ah!! My Lord, if he is still alive what will we do?" Our village is small, but he demanded porters. He said, "My son's mother-in-law, I don't ask much of you but it is emergency *loh ah pay*, so give me 15 people." And after we gave them to him, some have been gone for months and years [*died as porters*] so we can't do anything. How can we replace them when they are all we have?

Interview: 37: Killing, Torture, Rape, Looting

Name: "Saw Lu Phaw"
Sex: Male
Age: 37 year
Ethnicity: Karen
Religion: Christian
Occupation: Farmer
Address: Kyone-sein village, Kya Inn Seiki township, Karen State
Date of Interview: December 15, 1999
Source: HURFOM

Q: Why did you come to this village (a village in Three Pagoda Pass area inside Burmese territory)?

A: In my village, the SPDC soldiers tortured and killed villagers and I was very afraid of being tortured and killed. That is why I fled here.

Q: Why did the soldiers kill and torture the villagers and how?

A: After SPDC soldiers arrived at our village, they gathered the village leaders and a Christian pastor. And the commander told the pastor that his followers were supporters of the KNU, because he had not taught good disciplines to them. Then the commander ordered his soldiers to torture the pastor and two other village leaders. Furthermore, the soldiers tortured two women and ten other men in the village.

Besides tortures, the soldiers also raped the two women. They raped the first woman, and cut her breasts. Because of the serious injury, the woman lost consciousness at the end. The other woman was also repeatedly raped and the soldiers poured hot water in her nose, ruining the skin on her face and turning it red. When her baby, who was there with her, cried for milk, the soldiers did not allow her to feed the hungry baby.

Q: Do you know the names of those women?

A: Yes, I know them. They are Naw B—B—. 16 years old, and Naw M-K—, 17 years old. Both of them were already married.

Q: How did they torture the men in the village?

A: Among the many villagers, two villagers were severely tortured until they died. The soldier cut their bodies with knives in many places and then put salt in the injuries. They tortured them like that for five days and at the end, the soldiers killed them by clamping them between sharp bamboo slats and burning them in a fire.

Q: Do you know the names of two villagers?

A: Yes, they were Saw Kaw Kaw, 40 years old and Saw Lay Doe, 17 years old. Besides them, another villager, Saw Pha Kalu, 23 years old, was also strangled with strong rubber loops and was killed. They also tortured Saw Ple Htoo and his two sons. After the torture, the skin from the man's head was spoiled. Another man, Saw U Htoo, was also severely beaten and the soldiers cut his body in many places.

Besides torturing the villagers, the soldiers also took the villagers' belongings. Normally, whenever the soldiers arrive in our village, they also take rice, chickens, pigs, ducks and vegetables.

Q: How many times have SPDC soldiers entered your village?

A: They arrive about 3-4 times every month.

Q: Which date did the killing in the village you told me above happen?

A: It was between October 3 and 10, 1999.

Q: Did you remember the number of the battalion and the name of the commander?

A: The battalion was No. 120 and commander was Lt. Col. Maung Maung Oo.

Interview: 38: Force Labor

Name: "U Naing Aung"
Sex: Male
Age: 62
Nationality: Mon
Religion: Buddhist
Marital status: Married
Address: Kywe Talin village, Ye Phyu Township
Interview date: 17 December 1999
Source: THRF

Q: Did you bring your family along with you when you come out? If you did, what are their names and ages?

A: Yes, they came along with me. I have five family members. My wife Mi Nge is 51 now, The three children, Mg Kyi Ngwe is the oldest age 28 and the second child Ma Thein is 26,

the youngest Maung Aung San is 19.

Q: If you don't mind, could you please tell me why you fled to this Thai-Burma border?

A: To speak frankly, I could not stay in Kywe Talin village anymore. IB 405 troops are in Kywe Talin now. As soon as they arrived, they asked 50,000 betel nuts from our village. The cost of a betel nut is 7 *kyat* but the army troops didn't give any money for it. The head of our village himself is not good. He cooperated with those troops and bullied the villagers in many ways. They also asked for gravel and forced labor for Ko Mine motor road.

Q: What did the troops ask the villagers to do for this motor road?

A: Now, the military force is demanding our villagers for Ko Mine motor road. They ask 60 rock *kyins* as the quota of our village. The quality of the rock is Chipin in local name and sized 1 inch. For our village four households make one *kyin*. So we have to combine one household with a bullock cart and three households without a cart to workout together. One *kyin* is 10'X10'X1' = 100 cubic feet. After we finished digging the rocks we then have to send them to Ko Mine motor road by the cart. The village head himself demand the villagers to full fill the need of the army and he ordered his own villagers to leave the village if they can not work out for the army. So this is the way the village head and the arm forces gave us a lot of troubles at last I could not stand anymore and fled.

Q: Do you know other army troops apart from IB 409 who demand force labor or money from your village?

A: Yes, there are IB 405, IB 406, IB 408, IB 409 troops in our village. They always demand for force labor and arrest the villagers as porters. Once a villager was caught as a porter in their hands we have to bail him out with 3,000 *kyat*. If you can't afford to pay you were sent to the force labor camps for a week to 15 days to do hard work.

Q: Are there anymore families to flee from your village?

A: Yes, if the arm forces and the village head *continue* doing these harsh things on the villagers, they will all run away to find a peaceful areas. Some people ran away to Thailand with the whole family but only a few fled to this refugee camp.

Q: Is it convenient for you to stay here?

A: It is a just normal situation here. There's no *arresting* for porter or force labor here but there're some difficulties for living and feeding because no rice is sent to this refugee camp yet. One good thing to stay here is that people from my village and other villages who already came here help me a lot.

Interview: 39: Forced Portering, Torture, Extra-judicial killing, human mine sweeper, extortion

Name: Saw Nu Nu
Sex: Male
Age: 27
Ethnicity: Karen

Occupation: Farmer
 Religion: Baptist Christian
 Marital Status: Married with four children
 Address: Haw Ket village, Kyar-ein-seik-kyi township, Karen State
 Date of Interview: December 23, 1999
 Place of Interview: No Pho refugee camp, Umphang district, Thailand
 Source: HRDU

I arrived here on December 16, 1999. Altogether 196 people arrived on the same day. All were from Htee Tablu, Haw Ket and Htoo Doe Ne villages of the same district. Our village has suffered constant demand for forced labor and porters by the SPDC troops for a long time. The demand intensified in 1998. Previously, there were troops from SPDC division (44), but in 1998, the troops under Division (62) were transferred to our village. Since then, the situation has become worse. The troops regularly demanded various forms of labor and porters from our village and nearby village. Our village had to provide the demands without fail. In November 1998, I was among the people arrested for porters by the SPDC troops. Usually, the troops order the village headman had to collect the number of people they require. That time, they did not tell the headman, but came suddenly and rounded up all the male villagers they found in the village. I was arrested together with my brother and my father. Even the pastor from my village was arrested. Around 40 people were arrested. The eldest was over 50 years old. All of us were taken by the troops. When we arrived Dee Ta Pu village more villagers were rounded up so the number of porters reached over one hundred. I was ordered to carry eight 8 mm, one tin of rice and one equipment bag. Some porters were ordered to carry less. At the beginning the troops said it would be only two days but we were not released for eight days. They only provided a handful of rice and chilies. One meal per day was allowed. If someone was sick, the medic gave some tablets, but they could not rest. Two porters from Dee Ta Pu village were left in the valley because they could not carry anymore. The troops did not kill them but left them to die of starvation or lack of medicine. We were released after arriving in Azin village. It took us one week to get released. When we got to the valley where the two villagers were left, we found their dead bodies.

In January 1999, a column from LIB. 355 came to our village and spent two days. They were attacked by the KNU near our village. One villager serving as porter with the SPDC troops was killed during the fighting. The troops came back and arrested over ten villagers. The blamed the village for not informing them of the activities of the KNU. The pointed the guns onto the arrested villagers and threatened to kill all of them. All the villagers were beaten, kicked and tortured. They hit the villagers with gun butt and stick of wood. One villager named Naw Pu Lu received the most severe torture. He was accused of having communication with the KNU. The soldiers demanded that he turn in his gun or they would kill him. He was tied to a tree and tortured the whole night. Fortunately all were released after the village was able to pay 20,000 *Kyat* for their release.

In November 1999, another military column arrived our village. They were from Division 88 and the number was around 300. This column aimed to attack the KNU base in the region. When the column came into village, we all ran away and went into hiding. The troops moved forward to Palaw Htoo Kee village and arrested five villagers. They were

tortured and killed later. On December 3, 1999, village headmen from over 50 villages from the western bank of Dami stream were called on to attend a meeting by the commander of the military strategy operation. (SPDC) During the meeting, he warned the village headmen that the SPDC would launch an attack against the civilians this time. The SPDC had attempted to eliminate the KNU for a long time and the KNU was still active with the help of the local civilians. So this time the civilians would be targeted in order to eliminate the KNU in the region. All the village headmen were shocked and scared. Even before they had announced to target the civilians, the situation was already terrible. Now the situation and mistreatment against the civilians would be unbearable. They all believed the commander who further said all the former members of the KNU would be sought out and punished. He alleged that they were still working for the KNU and providing information about the SPDC troops to the KNU. If there were a clash or attack by the KNU near the village, the whole village would be burnt down. During the briefing, some villages were ordered to move from their village. I knew he ordered Rat Kalar, Haw Ket and Hti Kyaw Ki villages to move to Paw Htu Ki village. All the villages were also ordered to provide a hundred baskets of rice to them.

When the villagers heard these orders, all were disappointed and frustrated. There were KNU troops round the region and unexpected fighting might be taken place any time. If there were a clash, we, the villagers would be subjected to retaliation by the SPDC. We would be tortured, our village would be burned and relocated. We were not able to provide the amount of rice they asked of our village. But they came and took it away. In December just before I left for the border, I was arrested by the SPDC troop outside of the village. The troops did not demand the people they wanted as usual from the village headman, they just came and arrested us. Three people from my village, including myself, were arrested. The other were Al Pacel, Phaw Gay, and Wah Pah. There were around 60 porters from other villages as well. All of us were taken for six days. Nya Lu, aged over 30 from Htee khee village and another unidentified villager of same age were killed because they failed to proceed. Nya Lu was ordered to march in front of the troops as human mine sweeper. When he fell down out of exhaustion, he was stabbed in the back with a knife and died later. Another porter died of exhaustion.

We expected the demand of rice and porters would increase in the future. What could we do, stay there to be tortured or run way? In November and December until I left for the border, at least 30 villagers died or were killed while they were serving as porters. So I decided to run away to the border where I think is safer and better for my family.

Interview: 40: Torture, Forced Porter

Name:	Saw Phaw
Sex:	Male
Age:	38
Ethnicity:	Karen
Occupation:	Farmer
Religion:	Baptist Christian
Marital Status:	Married with five children
Address:	Htee Tablu village, Kyar-ein-seik-kyi township, Karen State

Date of Interview: December 23, 1999
Place of Interview: No Pho refugee camp, Umphang district, Thailand
Source: HRDU

The reason I came here is I can no longer suffer the demands by the SPDC for porters. Luckily, I spend most of my time hiding in jungle. However, I did work once as a porter in April 1999. A troop under the Division (88) led by Captain Kyi Win came and tried to arrest the villagers. All of us escaped and went into hiding in the jungle. Later the village headwoman came and requested us to go with the troops just for three days. We went and in actuality we served one week. Five male villagers were ordered to go with the troops. Each person had to carry different loads such as launchers, ammunitions, rice bag, and other materials. I myself was ordered to carry 40 kg of rice. It was too heavy for me because the journey was full of mountains to climb. My back was bruised after the porter period. You can see it now. The column went back and forth between Mae Para and Kel See villages. We were given no food. They told us to bring our food when they first took us from the village. We took food for five days, but after five days all the food we brought was gone. So we begged from the villagers from these two villages. The soldiers also looted the properties of the villages as most of them had gone into hiding. I did not see any male villagers, only female when we arrived at the village. The male villager ran away because they were afraid of being arrested and used as porters. When the troops saw no men, they asked the women in the village why they ran away. Women answered because they were afraid. Then the troops asked if they had a connection with the KNU, the women said no. If the troops were in good mood, there was no problem. But if they were in bad mood, they beat the women up. They also arrested villagers found on the way and sent them to be used as porters. Around 50 people from different villages were together with me working for the military as porters at that time. After one week all of us from same village were released. But the fate of the remaining people was unknown. When I got back home, I vomited blood and got seriously sick. I think it is due to the heavy loads I had to carry during the porter duty. After that experience, I was really afraid of being arrested for porter duty. So As soon as I heard that troops were coming, I'd run away. In July 1999, my son, Pha Kar, aged 13 and his friend Saw Cha Lwe Lwe aged 15 were arrested by the troops while they were tending the cows outside of the village. They were arrested in the evening and detained until midnight. No food was given, and they were tortured. They were just young boys and did not know anything about the KNU. The troops beat them because they couldn't speak Burmese. They kicked my son, all over his body, with military boots on. At mid-night, women from our village went there and pleaded that they were not guilty. Finally they were released.

Since November 1999, the situation has worsened with increasing porter demands and threats. Many innocent people have been arrested and tortured, accused of being KNU members or having communication with them. We were almost always on the run to hide in the jungle for fear of being arrested or killed. We can't survive in such a way without stability and a way to earn a living.

In December, 1999, all village headmen from Htee Tablu tract were ordered to attend a meeting by the SPDC. In the meeting the village headmen were told that the SPDC troops did not want to see anyone in the southeastern part of Htee Tablu. That meant anyone found in the area would be shot dead without any questions. And they declared that

all former KNU soldiers would be exposed and persecuted. I'd had a tattoo on my body since I was a kid. SPDC soldiers assumed that anyone who had a tattoo was a KNU soldier. So I was afraid I would be assumed to be a KNU soldier and face persecution. I did not want to live in this situation any longer. So I decided to leave. It took me five days to reach the border. My children got sick on the way.

Interview: 41: Detention, torture, extra-judicial killing (2 infants), forced portering

Name: Phar Not Mu
Sex: Male
Age: 38
Ethnicity: Karen
Occupation: Farmer
Religion: Baptist Christian
Marital Status: Married with one child
Address: Htoo Doe Ne village, Kyar-ein-seik-kyi township, Karen State
Date of Interview: December 23, 1999
Place of Interview: No Pho refugee camp, Umphang district, Thailand
Source: HRDU

Recently the SPDC declared that they would execute all former KNU soldiers in the region whether or not they still involve in the KNU activities. I joined the KNU in 1988 but defected in 1993. Since then I have not been involved in any activities of the KNU. However, this news made me scared. But I did not decide to leave until December when I was tortured.

On December 1, Wednesday, I went to Plaw Htoo Kee village, close to my village. I did not know troops were inside the village so I went into the village. I was caught by the troops and taken to the place where they were stationed. There were about 300 SPDC troops and 30 Peace force (former KNU but defected to the SPDC and joined them). The Peace Force was led by its leader, Tha Mu Hel. At first the SPDC troops did not know I was a former KNU soldier. They only asked me if I was a KNU soldier and I denied it. But the Peace Force arrived, and they knew I was. They tied my hands behind my back and started beating me. They demanded that I give a gun or die. They kicked my entire body with their boots and beat me with their guns. One SPDC soldier and one Peace Force soldier beat me until I became unconscious. When I regained consciousness, the soldiers took me to the place where some people were being detained. I found two men and ten women with three infants from Plaw Htoo Kee village. Two women were pregnant. I also found Tar Kwar (a) Kalar Kho, aged 40, from Wa Lu village, Win Ye township. I knew him before. He got arrested like me while he was visiting this village without knowing the news of the soldier presence. He was severely tortured for the same reason as me. In the evening, all us male detainees were tied together with one rope. We were forced to carry a pack containing goods on our back while women had to carry the ammunition. I think the women had to carry not less than 15 kilograms. We were taken to Kalu Ma Tee village. On the way, when the infants cried, the soldiers screwed the throats of two crying infants until they were

dead. They just dumped the dead bodies on the roadside. They were only 2 months and five months old. We could not do anything, but it was so sad to see what happened. In the Kalu Ma Tee village, the troops arrested another ten women and released the previous ten women. They women were taken to Pa De Pa Kaw village together with us. When we arrived Pa De Pa Kaw village, we were tortured again. Tar Kwar received worse. The soldiers slashed his body with a knife. I was so scared I might face the same fate like him. Fortunately, they just beat me up. I was able to escape at night. I untied the rope binding my hands and ran away. I ran and ran the whole night and arrived back to my village at 9 am on the next day. In the evening, I received a letter from Peace force. It said you could not run away from us, if we catch you we will kill you and if we catch your wife, we will kill her. It was signed by Tha Mu Hel himself. I did not dare to stay at home any longer. So all my family fled. We were joined by other villagers from other villages and came here together.

Interview: 42: forced portering, torture, extra-judicial killing

Name: Chauk Pe
 Sex: Male
 Age: 42
 Ethnicity: Karen
 Occupation: Farmer
 Religion: Baptist Christian
 Marital Status: Married with two children
 Address: Htee Tablu village, Kyar-ein-seik-kyi township, Karen State
 Date of Interview: December 24, 1999
 Place of Interview: No Pho refugee camp, Umphang district, Thailand
 Source: HRDU

The situation has been worse since November. The newly-transferred SPDC troops, Division 88, are notorious for abuses. Many former KNU soldiers were exposed and killed. When they did not get the former soldiers, they arrested their families and tortured them. Then they threatened the men to come back or they would kill the family, When the men came back, they tortured and killed them. This action aimed to exterminate the KNU activities in the region. They committed these atrocities as the warning to threaten the civilians to stop giving support to the KNU. More arrest, more demand for porters and more killings have been taking place since the new troops arrived.

I went to porter in August 1999. The village headman requested five villagers including me to go along with the troops. I did not want to go, but if I failed I had to pay a fine so I decided to go as requested. The troops were from LIB. 102. I was ordered to carry nine 81 mm rocket shells the whole way. They were heavy and I fell down several times. I was afraid of that the shells would explode when I fell down. When I fell down several times, the soldiers punched me. I got a cut in my face and it swelled.

Although my village headman said it would be only short period, I worked with them for a month. Not only me, but I saw other porters from other villages. I found five from Htee Tablu, five from rat Kala, five from Haw Kel, five from Htee Wah Doe, five from Phaw Naw Mu and others. There were about 150 porters together with the column. During that

time, I saw one porter from Phaw Naw Mu beaten to death with bamboo stick. He was sick and could not walk properly. He was beaten on his navel by three soldiers. When he fell down, they kept beating his bodies. The other porters were ordered to bury his body after his death.

The troops looted the belongings of the people at Taung Kalay village in Win Ye township, They burnt three houses and took rice from every house. They also arrested three villagers and tied them with rope. The villagers were interrogated about whether they had any connection with the KNU. They were accused of failing to report the activities of the KNU to the SPDC. These villagers were severely beaten and tortured. They were released on the next day.

No medicine was given. A little food was provided - only plain rice and salt. After one month, the soldiers released two porters at a time. They did not provide any food or medicine when we returned back to our village after serving one month free.

Interview: 43: Torture

Name: "Naing Htun Lin"
Sex: Male
Age: 50
Nationality: Mon
Religion: Buddhist
Marital status: Married
Address: Kyauk Htayan village, Ye Phyu Township
Interview date: 29 December 1999
Source: THRF

Q: Did your family come along with you?

A: No, I came alone.

Q: Could you please tell us why you fled to the refugee camp?

A: Because of some people who did not like me, gave the army false report and I had to run away so as not to be arrested by the army.

Q: What is the false report they gave to the army?

A: A man who did not like me went to LIB 273 troops and told them that I have connection with Naing Lay who is a leader of one of the Mon revolutionaries group. I have a gun and an I.com machine (walkie-talkie) given by this group. So Capt. Maung Maung Lay and ten soldiers from company 2 of LIB 273 came to arrest me on 6th September 1999. It was in the night. After arresting me they took me into the Kyauk Htayan village. In the center of the village they put me into a house. Capt. Maung Maung Lay himself interrogated me in that house.

Q: What did Capt. Maung Maung Lay and his company ask you and how did they interrogate you?

A: First, they tied my hands at my back when they arrested me. At the house in the center

of the village, they demanded the family who lived there to get out of the house. Then they started asking me questions. They asked me where those Mon arm forces were? How many members were there? Where I hid the gun and I.com machine. I answered that I had no connection with any arm forces and I did not know how many members and where. Also I didn't have any gun and I.com machine too.

They said I was lying and kicked my face with the boot. So I fell backward. Then they covered my face with a piece of cloth and poured water on my face. Asked questions again. I answered the same but the soldiers didn't believe me. Kicked me on my face again. Then I fell backward again. Two soldiers sat on each side of my laps and poured water on my face again. This going on for nearly the whole night but they didn't get any information from me so they changed the tactic. The new tactic was to touch my body with burning cheroot. They touched all over my body including my manhood. Here are the injuries you can see. They tortured me like this until in the morning.

Q: So in the morning light did they continue torturing you?

A: Because of the villagers who were going out in morning they stopped torturing me.

Q: Could you explain to us how you got out of these cruel hands of the soldiers?

A: As the night was drawing near, the young soldiers were talking to each other about me. I heard "This man keep us very busy so we better kill him." Then I became so scared. I tried to untie myself in the house. Later I was freed from the binding ropes. At once I jumped down from the house and started running through the soldiers even though I knew I could die.

Q: Did the soldiers know that you run away? Didn't they shoot you?

A: They knew. But they have no chance to shoot me because all the soldiers were surrounding outside the house. If they shoot me, they were going to hurt each other. Instead of shooting me they shot into air.

Q: What do you think the army official will do to your family who were left in the village?

A: I think they will arrest my family.

Interview: 44: Force labor

Name:	"U Tha Warn"
Sex:	Male
Age:	72
Nationality:	Burman
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital status:	Married
Address:	Zay Yar Quarter, Ye Township
Interview date:	16 January 2000
Source:	THRF

Q: Did you bring your family with you when you flee here?

A: I only brought my wife Daw Ngwe Kyi, age 59.

Q: Why did you flee here? Could you tell us?

A: Well, if I have to talk about this it will take the whole day. Firstly, I'll tell you about 10 quarters in Ye Township. These are (1) Zay Yar, (2) Nanda, (3) Aung Thu Kha, (4) Yan Gyi Aung, (5) Pyidaw Thar, (6) Marlar, (7) Khay Mar, (8) Aung Thong Aung, (9) Yan Myo Aung, (10) Annawa. There's three battalions called IB 306/343/61. These troops call us always as force labor and porter.

We did force labor mostly for the army such as mowing the grass, cutting woods, digging ditches and cleaning in the army official's houses. All these kind of work had to be done for three battalions by the people from all ten quarters. If you can't go to take part in that force laboring work you have to pay for 500 *kyat* per day to the military officials. When the army call for labor work, elderly grandma, grandpa, women and even children have to go to avoid paying 500 *kyat* per day with their own food packs. As you know in Burma the *Lock Aha Pay* (force to work) has to do with our own food packs. Don't expect a *pya* (100 *pya* = 1 *kyat*) from those military officials. And if you do something wrong while working they will insult you with obscene words.

I remember one incident. In August 1999, during the rainy season, in the middle of the Ye Township, there's a big lake. This lake has been there since a long time. A lot of hyacinth and water lilies are growing in that lake. The army called all the people in Ye Township to get rid of all the water lilies and hyacinth.

For this work they demanded only the men to do leaving the women and children. I asked a soldier "Why do you want to get rid of water lilies and hyacinth? These make the lake more beautiful." The soldier answered "It is closing near (9999). Radios announced rumors, the Government (SPDC) has a superstition that if the *Kyar* (water lilies) coming near the *Kann* (bank of the lake) they have to give up the *Nun* (throne of power), so we have to clean up the *Kyar*." I laughed at it.

Q: What about the porter?

A: Every day they ask porters from 10 quarters in Ye, if there's an operation or not, they arrest the people as porters. We pay 200 *kyat* for porter fee and 100 *kyat* for night security fee per household monthly. Even then they are arresting the people to use as porters. Sometime they arrest people as special porters. When they arrest for special porters the village head has to go along with the soldiers. Once a porter was arrested by the soldiers we have to bail him out with 3,000 *kyat*, if you can not pay you have to stay in the army camp for seven or five days. Before you are released you have to do all the hard work they asked you to do.

In October 1999, I myself was arrested as a special porter. I begged them not to do so, as I am very old now. They won't listen. Dragged me to the IB 106. In the morning they released me as my wife bailed me out with 3,000 *kyat*.

Q: Could you please tell us about what the military officials do under their control when you came out?

A: The military is leading the business of buying summer paddy. The leading battalions are

IB 61, IB 106 and IB 343. The military decide which field is good yielding or poor yielding. Eight *tin* of paddy from a poor field and twelve *tin* of paddy from a good field have to be sent to the paddy purchasing sites opened by the army. The army buys at the rate of 400 *kyat* per *tin*, while outside price is at least 800 *kyat/tin*. If you can not sell the amount of paddy as the army decide they will arrest you and confiscate your paddy fields.

At my Zay Yar quarter the farmers whose paddy fields occupied by the army are:

1. U Htun Yin, age 65 32 acre
2. U Aung Min, age 70 34 acre
3. U Ba Eit, age 70 26 acre and
4. Other 15 farmers was more than 100 acre

The army grows summer paddy on those fields that they have confiscated. But it is only the name sake, that they called army's fields, for farmers including the people in the town have to do all the work in the fields from plowing to harvesting. Since the beginning of the summer paddy project, fifty labors from each quarter are ordered to work in the fields everyday.

The army collects the rubber products also. They demand 1 lb of rubber from 100 rubber trees. The actual price of rubber 1 lb is 65 *kyat* but the army paid 25 *kyat* only. The army charges the tax for everything. We have to support the army or police with the things they need including charcoal every month without getting any money.

Q: The army is expanding the town according to the increase of population. Is the army doing these things in your town?

A: Yes, they do. In the beginning of 1999, near the Aung Thukha quarter they called for 1,000 households to work for the expansion of the town. They confiscated a lot of land from the owners without giving any compensation. They just gave each land owner a piece of land of length 60 X width 40 ft. And those pieces of land are far away from the main streets and markets. If you want a plot near the main streets or markets you have to pay extra money 5,000 *kyat* to 6,000 *kyat* and if you want a plot in a street you have to pay extra money 3,000 *kyat* to 4,000 *kyat* to the army officials. Even though the military government is expanding the new cities and towns, the main important thing, electricity, is often cut off. We have lamp post in every streets and roads in our town. But only the main road, army camps and office buildings have electricity and the rest of the streets have no electricity for most of the day. One thing is, whenever some top army officers come, the whole town is lighted up with electricity. So you must understand that the top army officers are in town when the town is lighted. But we have to pay 35 *kyat* regularly for the electricity every month.

Q: Do you see any difference when staying in this refugee camp?

A: I find a lot of difference here. Living and accommodation is difficult but there's no porter, no forced labor. I can live here peacefully. I don't have to worry about being arrested for porter anymore.

Interview: 45: Livelihood, Detention

Name: Nai Pyo

Sex: Male
Age: 72 years
Ethnicity: Mon
Religion: Buddhist
Occupation: Farmer
Interview Date: January 12,2000
Source: HURFOM

Q: Where is your native place and what is the major occupation of your villagers?

A: My native village is Kaw-mi village, Kaw-bein village tract of Kawkareik Township. In my village, there are about 350 households and all the villagers are Mons. Most of them are paddy growing farmers like me and only a small number of families, who have no land, have to fish. Most own about 10 acres of land and work as paddy growing farmers.

Q: How is your crop situation this year?

A: I lost nearly half of my total crop because of flood this year. Around my farm, there are about 250 acres of paddy-growing farmland owned by our villagers. When the floodwater (in October) was high, it is estimated that about 200 acres of that land went under water during the 2-week flood, which killed most of the paddy plants.

Q: In the normal situation, if there is no flood, how many baskets of paddy can you get from your farms?

A: In a normal situation, if we have enough of fertilizer, one acre of land can produce about 50 baskets of paddy. However, as my farm is close to the river (Gyaing river), I face floods every year. If the flood lasts many days, we lose more paddy. If not, we are lucky.

Q: Does the government provide you with fertilizer and if not, how do you get fertilizer to your farm?

A: The government does not give fertilizer, but as we can not get the required amount of paddy without the fertilizer, we have to buy factory made fertilizer every year. In my farm, I have to give four sack of fertilizer for one acre of land, and we have to put three types of fertilizer. Those fertilizers are quite expensive. The three types of fertilizer are at prices about 2,600 *kyat*, 4,000 *kyat* and 2,000 *kyat* respectively.

We always hear from the radio that the government will provide fertilizers at low costs. We also knew that the officials in Kawkareik town also brought many thousands sacks of fertilizer from Moulmein. Those fertilizers were for the farmers. However, when we asked the price of fertilizer, the price was similar to the price at the market. When we asked the officials why the government fertilizer price was quite high, they complained that the government did not provide for the transportation of the fertilizer, so they had to and add calculate the transportation costs to the actual fertilizer prices. However, even at the higher prices, the government could not provide sufficient amounts of fertilizer. The officials could provide only a half sack of fertilizer for one acre of land. So all the farmers depend on fertilizers from the shops. We can get fertilizer anytime we need from the shops. Normally, the government officials sell fertilizers to private shops and the farmers have to buy from those shops.

Q: Did the government authorities ask you to sell the set amount of paddy to the government?

A: Yes, they asked. In our township, they asked 8 baskets of paddy per acre to sell to the government paddy-buying center. For our village, we have to sell the paddy in Kaw-bein paddy-buying center. Before the authorities send orders to farmers to sell paddy, they also lend money to the farmers. When the authorities came to our village, they forced the farmers to take their money and asked them to sign a promise letter that we would sell the paddy to paddy-buying center. The deadline for all farmers to complete the selling of the paddy was before the end of October 1999. The price of the paddy that government bought from us is 350 *kyat* per basket, which is three times less than the market price.

Q: How did you manage to sell the paddy to the government to fulfill your duty?

A: I have to give a total of about 80 baskets of paddy. From my farm I received only 260 baskets of paddy.

Q: Did you have to hire labourers to work with you or did you work alone?

A: No. I have to hire one labourer for the whole year, because I am too old to work alone at my farm. Thus, I have to give about 100 baskets of paddy to that labourer alone. Additionally, during the period when I grew the small paddy plants and reap the crops, I also have to hire some day labourers at 300 *Kyat* per day. Thus, I have to spend another 40,000 *Kyat* for that labour cost. Additionally, I also have to buy fertilizers at the cost of 100,000 *Kyat* every year to provide for my 10 acres. At the end I have nothing left after giving paddy to the government.

Q: And how you can survive?

A: Soon after I gave paddy tax to government, I had to sell two acres of lands and received 150,000 *kyat* from that. But this was not the end of the story. I had to sell another half acre of my land.

Q: Why?

A: On January 9,2000, the army officers from Kawkareik town came and called a meeting with all the farmers from our village. In the meeting, one army officer explained that besides the paddy sold to the government, the army also required an additional 2 baskets of paddy from each acre. The meeting was held in the house of the village chairman.

Q: Then what happened to the farmers?

A: I was the eldest farmer in the group, and told the army commander that we already sold the paddy to the government paddy-buying center at 8 baskets per acre. I also explained to him about the flood conditions of the last rainy season. The commander became angry with me and asked my name. He shouted at me and said that “all land is owned by the government and not owned by farmers.” Then, the commander and two soldiers brought all the farmers including the women to Kawbein police station and forced them to give the additional 2 baskets of paddy per acre. They released the farmers who promised them to sell the paddy. They detained me for one night because I did not give them this promise. The next day, my wife sold another half acre of land and bought 20 baskets of paddy from other rich farmers and it them to the paddy-buying center for the army. Then they released me.

Interview: 46: Life as Illegal Migrant Worker, Forced Labor, Extra-judicial Killing

Name: "Sai On"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 24
 Ethnicity: Shan
 Occupation: Farmer
 Marital status: Married, no children, but looking after younger siblings, ages 5 and 8.
 Address: Mai Sili, Kenglom tract, Kunhing Township, Shan State
 Date of Interview: January 2, 2000
 Place of interview: Fang district, Northern Chiang Mai province
 Source: SHRF

In February 1997, my village was relocated to Kunhing. We moved to the village of Na Sae, which is about seven kilometers east of Kunhing on the main road to Kali. I stayed there for one month. I was made to do forced labour there by the Burmese military. I was not allowed back to my old village to farm, and I could not earn enough to support my wife and my younger brother and sister, so we all came to Thailand. We came in a group of 10 people.

I spent over two years working in the Fang area. We moved around from place to place, working in different fields. We just lived from hand to mouth. Then in November, when the police started cracking down on the Shans, we had to go and sleep in hiding. We were afraid the police would come and arrest us at night.

I was working near the village of Mon Bin at the time. I was preparing the onion-beds in the fields. Instead of staying in our field-hut, during the crackdown we would go and sleep away from the village under some trees by a stream. All the family went together. We would put some sacks on the ground and sleep on them. There were about 16 other people too sleeping nearby in the same way.

We were very scared of arrest, so finally, we decided to go back to Kunhing to see if we could survive there. In fact we did not want to go back to Kunhing. Just before we went back, we heard the news that my wife's brother had been shot by the SPDC troops. His name was Khee Min, aged 35. He was married with three children. The oldest was 17, the youngest was 5. He came from the village of Ho Yarn (also relocated to Kunhing in 1997). He had been living in the relocation site of Na Sae, but had sneaked back to his old village in November to get one of his cattle to sell. He had gone with six other people. They had been sitting talking in the fields near Ho Yarn when a patrol of about 70-80 Burmese troops from LIB 546 found them. They all ran away, but my brother tripped and fell in the water (of the Nam Pang river). He was shot and killed. We knew he was dead because the people who had gone with him went back later and found his body and buried it.

After we travelled back to Kunhing in December, I tried to help my old parents-in-law. It was hard for them after my brother-in-law had died. I helped them in their hill fields near the relocation site, but the Burmese troops at Kunhing forced all the relocated villagers in Ta Sae to work for them. There are about 60 households in Ta Sae, and every 5 days, one person from every household had to go and work for the Burmese military. I had to go and

work for them too. I was made to work on their peanut and corn fields. These were fields which had been confiscated from the local people. The crops were sold to make money for the army. We were not given any food or water when we went to work. There were also children as young as eight years old forced to work. There were soldiers keeping guard. They beat people if they did not work hard enough.

It was hard for people in the relocation site to survive. Some of them would sneak back to plant their old fields, but if they were caught, they were shot, like my brother-in-law.

So I only stayed a few weeks in Kunhing. There was no way I could support my family. I came back with my wife and my younger brother and sister again. It cost us 30,000 *kyat* to travel there and back. I only got back to Thailand five days ago. I haven't managed to find work yet. I don't know what I will do.

I worry for the future of my younger brother and sister. I cannot afford to send them to school in Thailand. The older boy, who is eight years old, is disabled in one leg. It happened after we had been relocated to near Kunhing. He got sick one day and my wife took him to a quack doctor, who injected him in his leg. His leg got infected and swollen, and since then he can't bend his foot properly. If there was a refugee camp for Shans, I would go and stay there.

Interview: 47: Extra-judicial Killing, Torture, Life as illegal migrant worker

Name: "Sai Jan"
 Sex: Male
 Age: 27
 Ethnicity: Shan
 Occupation: Farmer
 Marital status: Married, 1 child aged 1 year
 Address: Nong Pha, Nong Hee tract, Kengtong Township, Shan State
 Date of interview: January 2, 2000
 Place of interview: Fang district, Northern Chiang Mai province, Thailand
 Source: SHRF

My village was forcibly relocated by the Burmese troops to Wiang Kao, near Kengtong, in March 1996. I stayed there over three years. We weren't allowed back to our old fields, but I managed to plant some new fields near Tong Long.

I came to Thailand on November 10, 1999. I came because of the Burmese troops. They killed my brother and my father. My brother was taken to be a porter in November 1998. He was called Ing Ta, aged 32. He was married with one seven-year-old child. He was taken by SPDC IB 65 from Murg Nai. He was taken to Kho Lam. We heard from some relatives that he had been too tired to carry on walking and was beaten to death. My father died just a few months ago. He was 62 years old. His name was Loong Or. He had gone to catch fish in the Nam Teng river near our old village when he was caught by Burmese troops. They took him to their camp and beat him all over. He was all bruised and swollen. When he came back to our home he became very ill, and finally he died. After this, I decided to come to Thailand. I thought I too would die if I did not come. I came

with my wife and child, and also my old mother. When we came to Thailand it was right at the time when the police were arresting everybody. I found work in an onion field at Mon Pin, but we did not dare stay at the field. We went to sleep in a lychee orchard about 2 kilometres away. We just put up a plastic sheet and slept under it. We were very afraid of the police.

My wife also worked. She carried the baby with her. But even so, we could not afford to support my mother. We had to send her to stay with some of our other relatives in the Fang area.

Now, I am still working in an onion field. On the days I work I can get 70 *baht* a day. I have managed to pay the 200 *baht* protection fee, so now I don't have to hide anymore at night. But I still don't dare go out in the road. Also I don't have enough money to support my mother, so I can't bring her to stay with us.

Some days I have to spray herbicide on the onion fields. I wear a mask, but now I'm feeling quite sick. If there was a refugee camp for Shans, I would go and stay there.

Interview: 48: Forced Labor, Forced Porters, Life as illegal migrant worker

Name:	“Loong Mart”
Sex:	Male
Age:	56
Ethnicity:	Shan
Occupation:	Farmer
Marital status:	Married, two children aged 7 and 5 years old
Address:	Nam Wan, Nar Boi tract, Laikha Township, Shan State
Date of interview:	January 2, 2000
Place of interview:	Fang district, Northern Chiang Mai province, Thailand
Source:	SHRF

Our village was relocated to Kho Lam relocation site in 1997. I spent one year in Kho Lam but we weren't allowed back to our old fields and we were forced to work for the Burmese military, building their new camp, so I moved with my family to the village of Na Kong Moo (inside Shan State near the Thai border, opposite Fang). I stayed there for two years, working as a labourer on other people's fields. But in 1999 more Burmese troops began moving into the area, and they forced people to build their new camp. Every household had to provide one person every ten days, either to work on their camp or to be a porter. I was taken many times. I could not bear it, so finally I decided to move to Thailand.

During November I was working in an onion field near Mon Bin Ner. We used to stay in a lychee orchard near the field, but we didn't dare stay there in case we were arrested, so we had to go and sleep in some fields far from the road. It took us about half an hour to walk there.

Now I have paid 200 *baht* as a “protection fee” so we dare sleep where we used to. But we are still scared. It's normal. Even though I've paid 200 *baht* I know I can still be arrested. I haven't got a card or anything. And I can't speak Thai properly, so I can't explain things if I get arrested. If there was a refugee camp for Shans, I would go and stay there.

Interview: 49: Relocation, concentration camp, Forced labour, Torture, Livelihood

Name: Sae Rei
 Sex: Male
 Age: 56
 Ethnicity: Karenni
 Religion: Christian, Baptist
 Occupation: Farmer
 Martial Status: married with seven children
 Address: Bae Ngaw concentration camp, Loikaw township, Karenni
 Date of interview: March 14, 2000
 Place of interview: Karenni Camp (2), Thailand
 Source: HRDU

I was originally from Dri Dah in Shadaw Township. My village was relocated last year to Bae Ngaw camp, which is 20 miles from Loikaw. I moved to the camp because I thought I would be able to survive. Villagers from Daw Tahaw, Daw Say, Daw Kalaw, Daw Mu Lae and Dri Dah moved to Bae Ngaw at the same time.

I left my village (the relocation camp) on March 9, 2000 because I could no longer face the hardship created by the military. We were like the prisoners in detention. The troops monitoring us did not allow us to go and work on the farms we had outside of the camp. When the troops found someone outside the camp or on the way to their farm, they were rounded up and detained at the military barracks. An outpost from IB 54 was responsible for security and monitoring the movement of the people in the camp. They also deployed many informers in the village so that we felt like we were watched 24 hours in a day. Those who got arrested by the troops were severely interrogated and detained at the military bases in Loikaw. No one was allowed to pay a visit during the detention unless they paid a big amount of money.

There were regular demands in the concentration camp of forced labor for the military. People, mostly men, living in the village are subjected to unpaid labor for the military battalions nearby and even those in Loikaw. Whenever the military required the civilians for forced labor, they sent out an order to the headman and ordered him to provide the required number of people on the specific time and date. However, sometimes the troops came by surprise and rounded up people randomly to porter. In December 1999, three villagers: Tho Rei, Day Rei and Khu Rei, all over 30 years old, were taken as porters by troops from IB 54. During their time labouring as porters, they were accused of being supporters of the KNPP, then tortured and put into stocks at IB 54 base in Likaw. At of the time I left, none of them had been released. I heard Ku Rei died due to the severe torture by the soldiers.

I have done forced labor several times for the military outpost of IB 54 in Daw Ta Hae village. Our village in the camp had to provide labour at least ten times every month. I had to go at least once a month. If I was not available, my wife or my children had to go instead. Some children were as young as 10 years old. Most work was for one day at the military outpost. I was able to go early morning and return by night. Then in mid 1999 the outpost was moved to Htee Sakan village, which was longer distance from my village. It

took three hours to get there. Work included digging trenches, repairing barracks, cutting trees, and collecting firewood. I did not have any experience of being beaten by the troops personally. But the soldiers always verbally abused us. They called us “Doggie-Kayah” and told that we were lazy so they were teaching us a lesson about hard work. We had to bring our own food. Only one hour at mid-day was allowed for taking a break.

KNPP troops attacked the SPDC military column on February 6, 2000 near Lae Phon village. On the next day, February 7, the troops from IB 54 came into Bae Ngaw village where people were gathering for a funeral. They troops attempted to arrest all men they found, but people ran away. Some unfortunate men were rounded up. They were Soe Rei, aged 33, Say Pae, aged 30, Par Rei aged 30, Nga Rei aged 32 who was a pastor, Sar Rei aged 20 and Har Rei aged 35. All were beaten upon their arrest and then taken to the military base of IB 54 in Loikaw. They were tied up with ropes and then beaten on their backs the entire way. The troops accused them of having connection with the KNPP troops that attacked the SPDC troops.

After this arrest, the villagers began fleeing from the village. I also thought of moving because I did not have time to work for my family due to the constant forced labor demands by the authorities. We had to sell our cattle in order to make money for living. We had nothing left and knew we would end up in detention one day if we stayed in the village any longer. We discussed this with our friends and finally decided to leave at night. About 20 households came together. No house was left behind when we finally moved out at the beginning of March.

We could not walk straight to the border. We went hiding in the forest in the daytime to avoid the SPDC troops. Some were very sick due to the malnutrition. We took some rice but it was not enough. I know four people who died on the way. They were Bu Mei (female, aged 43), Lee Mai (single female, aged over 20) Pae Mo (female, aged 6) and Ru Mai (female, aged 3) from my village. They died of malaria. My children were sick but they are all right now. I have no idea what I am going to do next.

Interview: 50: relocation camp, arrest, forced labour

Name:	Mae Rei
Sex:	Male
Age:	38
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Religion:	Christian, Animist
Occupation:	Farmer
Marital status:	married
Address:	Bae Ngaw concentration camp, Loikaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	March 14, 2000
Place of interview:	Karenni Camp (2), Thailand
Source:	HRDU

I was originally from Bae Ngaw. Four years ago, many new people moved to my village near Loikaw. It has become crowded since then. The number of households reached 170 after they arrived. When they first came, they stayed with their friends or relatives and

then they built their own houses. The military did not provide anything for these relocated people. They had to collect the things required for building houses by them-selves. No food supplies were given. After a while, the new people were allowed to work on farms, provided they were not far from the camp. Recently though, before we came here, the troops did not even allow us to go to the farms close to the camp. The soldiers told us that they would arrest and imprison anyone found outside of the camp.

There was no SPDC military outpost near my village until the new people moved in. Then troops set up an outpost in Daw Ta Hek village not far from my village, and the demand for forced labor started when the military moved in. The people were ordered to build new bunkers, barracks and buildings in the new camp. The soldiers only had to send a letter with orders to the headman and then he had to collect the number of people mentioned in the letter.

Beginning in 1997, I spent most of my time on my farm rather than living in the village because the demand for forced labor and porters had become more frequent. My farm was far from the village and remote, and I felt safer staying on the farm than in the village. Only when there were no troops near the village, I would sneak into the village and stay with my family. Many male villagers lived like me. Near my farm, there were seven men including me who stayed and worked. We moved from place to place every year according to our traditional farming method and more importantly for security. I heard many of my friends who had stayed in the village had been arrested and detained by the soldiers without any specific reason. Others lived in fear of harassment and arrest. Thus, I decided to stay on my farm. When I did return, I did not have any chance to spend more than one week. I would run away when I heard the military was coming to my village. I sent paddy to my family so that they had something to eat.

The atrocities increased in 1999. More troops were assigned to monitor the movement of the civilians in the area. The troops arrested anyone found outside the camp and detained them, alleging they were supporters of the armed group. Sometimes the troops came together with a Naga group (a splinter group from the KNPP now joined with the SPDC) and arrested the people whom the Naga reported were supporters of the KNPP. They came with the list of people to be arrested from the village.

After an arrest of villagers on February 6, 2000, people started to move from the village because they were afraid of being arrested with a charge of supporting the KNPP. No one knew who was on the list of suspected people. All the men went to hide in the forest after the first arrest. More men, including me, were arrested in the month of February at a wedding ceremony in Daw Sae village. We all were taken as porters and forced to carry goods to Nam Swan Pwint village which was a one hour walk from the village. Then we were taken to their outpost and photos were taken of each of us. I did not know the reason. The next day, the troops released us. The troops from IB 54 came back again near the end of February, and when they did not find any men in the village, they got angry and forced the women to gather in the middle of the village. All women including elderly and children were forced to sit under the scorching sun for a whole day. The troops also made a body search of the women. When they were satisfied the troops returned.

Some of my villagers moved to Lwelin and some moved to the Shan-Karenni border. First I tried to hide in the Shan-Karenni border. But the troops from IB 54 and the Naga group even came to that area and arrested Sae Rei and Thi Rei from my village who were

also hiding in the same area with me. They were accused of being part of the group of people arrested on February 7 at my village. I continued hiding in the area another ten days but decided to leave for a safer place.

At first there were only three households from my villages who moved away. While we were on the way, we found a big group of people from different places. I found some other villagers from my village in the group, so we joined with them. We walked to the Thai border and met the KNPP people on the border. They provided food and medicine. We did not have enough food on the way. It took at least a week to get here after we met the group of people.

Interview: 51: forced labour, theft, torture

Name:	Dae Rei
Sex:	Male
Age:	30
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Religion:	Christian, Roman Catholic
Occupation:	Farmer
Marital status:	Single
Address:	Daw Pa Pa village, Loikaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	March 14, 2000
Place of interview:	Karenni Camp (2), Thailand
Source:	HRDU

Forced labor was very common in my village. The villagers had to frequently go and work in the military outpost. In 1999, the demand for forced labor increased. I had no time to work for my family and for myself. We were always on demand for free labor at the military outpost at Htee Sakhan village where an outpost of IB 54 was situated. My family was assigned to provide unpaid labor at least five times a month during 1999. It was a three-hour walk from my village. Each time, we had to go early in the morning and come back in late evening after all the work was done. Between 20-30 people went per time and brought their own food and material for work. Some women had to go as well because their husbands were not available and they could not afford to hire a substitute. The duties were various from digging trenches to building houses for the soldiers. Not only did we have to work free for the military, also the soldiers regularly took away our chicken and pigs without asking permission.

I came here before all the villagers in my village had left due to the recent arrests in February, 2000. Two days after an attack on the SPDC column at Lae Phon on February 6, over 150 troops of IB 54, LIB 250, 261, 423 and Naga groups led by Bo Ho Rei came to our village. The group was led by Captain Mya Myint from LIB 250. As soon as we heard they were coming, all the male villagers went out and hid in the jungle. The troops went from house to house and forced the people they found to gather in the school in the middle of village. Most were women but six were men from 15-55 years old. They were Ei Rei aged 34, Bu Rei aged 25, Ko Rei aged 18, Shar Rei 25, Nga Rei aged 20 and Ngee Rei, a Christian pastor aged 25. The men were separated from the rest of women. Their hands

were tied behind their backs, and then they were beaten with large wood sticks. They were also burned with the flame of a cigarette lighter. Then the male villagers were taken to Loi Lin by military truck. They were later sent to Loikaw and separately detained in the military bases in town.

Interview: 52: Forced labour, Extortion, Forced Portering, Torture, Arrest

Name: Nae Rei
 Sex: Male
 Age: 35
 Ethnicity: Karenni
 Religion: Animist
 Occupation: Farmer
 Martial status: Married with two children
 Address: Pae Law concentration camp, Loikaw township, Karenni
 Date of interview: March 14, 2000
 Place of interview: Karenni Camp (2), Thailand
 Source: HRDU

I was originally from Pae Law near Loikaw. Four years ago, about 100 households from Daw Karaw Ku, Daw Tayoke and Daw Sae moved to my village because of a relocation order by the SPDC. The number of households reached 200, but now only 50 are left. People have been moving out of the village due to the increasing military control and hardship upon them.

After the villagers from other villages moved in, the military troops from IB 72 came and set up their outpost in my village. There were always about 30 soldiers in that outpost. They were just stationed there and we were responsible for everything they needed. Various forms of forced demands and suppression followed after that. Order for forced labor at the military outpost was very frequent after the troops moved in. They demanded the villagers to collect bamboo for the construction of new buildings. We had to work for the construction of the new camp for a month. Then the building of fences followed. The troops ordered the villagers to build three fences around the camp. The soldiers were also notorious for stealing and killing animals raised by the villagers. During the summer, they ordered us to fetch water for their use in the outpost. They did not care whether we had cows or not to carry water from the stream outside of the village. They just ordered it. So we had to carry water by ourselves to the outpost. It was very tiresome.

We were also ordered to go with the troops and work as porters. Monthly my village had to provide two porters for the regular assignment. But when there was an emergency, the troops asked more people or rounded them up randomly. I myself went to porter in November 1999 with three other villagers. It was my last time. The soldiers ordered us to carry mortar shells and rations for the troops to another village. It took five days because they moved around the area instead of going straight to the village. The last time, in March 1999, it took one month for me to go as a porter to another village. The troops took villagers from other villages as well. Altogether, 12 porters from various villages were ordered

to gather at the outpost of IB 72. Beating was common during the service and food was not given sufficiently. Rice with chilies and salt was only given two times per day. I had to carry ammunition and food along with the soldiers in the column. The soldiers kicked us from behind when we were not carrying well, particularly as we were climbing mountains. They also beat us with rifle butts.

People could go and work in their farm if it was not far from the village. Those who had farms far from the village were at risk to go there because the military has threatened that they would kill anyone found in the jungle. There were many landmines planted south of the motor road near my village in order to prevent an approach by the KNPP troops. No one dared to do anything in that area. Some villagers were killed last year because they stepped on landmines planted by the SPDC troops.

People were also ordered to contribute rice for the military every year. Each household was required to provide 2-3 baskets of rice per year, depending on the size of farm. Last year, we faced a big problem of shortage of rice because there had been a drought the previous year. We had hardly enough to eat for ourselves.

Interview: 53: Arrest, torture, forced portering

Name:	Har Rei
Sex:	Male
Age:	35
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Religion:	Christian, Roman Catholic
Occupation:	Farmer
Martial status:	Married with five children
Address:	Bae Ngaw concentration site, Loikaw township, Karenni
Date of interview:	March 14, 2000
Place of interview:	Karenni Camp (2), Thailand
Source:	HRDU

After fighting between the SPDC and KNPP troops near Lae Phon village on February 6, 2000, I was arrested by a combined troops of LIB 250, 261, IB 54 and Naga group in the forest while I was collecting firewood for my family. The troops arrested me because they suspected me of being an informer of the KNPP. They tied my hands with rope behind my back and interrogated me as to where the KNPP troops were, how many of them there were, and what weapons they had, etc. etc. I did not know anything about them so I sincerely answered that I did not know. I said I only heard about the fighting like them. They did not believe and started to beat me. Three soldiers and one officer beat my head with rifle butts, and punched my face. I got a cut on my head and blood was running down from my nose. When I fell down, they kicked my head with military boots. My hearing is still bad due to this. Then they tied my hands with rope behind my back and forced me to go along with him. I was not given any food or water until we arrived Bae Ngaw. When we got there in the evening, I was put in one house and given water. At night, the troops arrested more people. They were Par Rei, Thi Pae, Kho Rei and Nga Rei, all from Bae Ngaw, my village. They were arrested because the Naga group told the SPDC that these people were

supporters of the KNPP. We all were taken to the military base of IB 54 in Loikaw, then I was taken to Loilin. The rest were left at IB 54. I spent one night in Loilin with continuous torture the whole night. They forced me to confess that I was a member of the KNPP and involved in the recent fighting. They told me that they never believe in the villagers from Bae Ngaw and accused us to being sympathizers of the KNPP. A handful of rice was given and no medicine was provided even when my body was swelled and bleeding.

On the next day, I was taken with the military column. I was surprised when they did not order me to carry thing like other porters. There were 20-30 porters with the column. Then I realized that they took me as a guide to the KNPP hideouts in the region. The column moved around the area and forced me to show the hideouts of the KNPP that I really did not know. The troops moved around the Htee Lon village tract for seven days and I had to go along with them. Everyday I was beaten up by the troops, sometime very harshly. The soldiers beat me with the sticks and threatened to stab me with knives. Among the porters with the column, Karenni porters were treated worse than Burmese porters. and were always subjected to torture. The soldiers said we deserved that kind of bad treatment because the Karenni armed group had attacked them. When the troops found men on the way, they rounded them up and transferred them to other columns to be used later as porters.

During my time with them, I was tied with a rope that was attached to the belt of soldier in front of me. This was to prevent me from escaping. On the seventh day, the soldier responsible for me went to use the toilet. He untied my rope and ordered me to follow another soldier. I realized the soldier was carrying artillery, and assumed that he could not follow me if I ran away so I decided to run away. When I ran away, the soldiers tried to follow after me but I was able to escape. I did not go back straight to my village and hid in the jungle one night. When I went back, my family told me that the soldiers had come to my village. My family was fortunately they were not there at the time. One woman, who was my relative, was slashed on her face because she was not able to answer the questions of the soldiers. She was Par Mei, aged 22 and mother of two.

I immediately took my wife and children and hid in the jungle. Other villagers also moved out from the village. Some went to the Karenni-Shan border. After hiding in the jungle for about two weeks, I decided to move to a better place. No one was left in the village. It took us ten days to reach the border and then come here. One the way my youngest son and my wife got ill. Both are now in hospital and still vomiting. I don't know what I should do next. If the Thai authorities do not allow us to take refuge, I will be in big trouble. I don't dare go back home.

Interview: 54: Arrest, torture, forced portering

Name:	Oo Rei
Sex:	Male
Age:	26
Ethnicity:	Karenni
Religion:	Christian, Roman Catholic
Occupation:	Farmer
Martial status:	Married with two children

Address: Bae Ngaw concentration site, Loikaw township, Karenni
Date of interview: March 14, 2000
Place of interview: Karenni Camp (2), Thailand
Source: HRDU

When the military came into my village on February 8, I was sick and could not get up. I did not know which battalion they belonged to.

First the soldiers asked my female friend to bring me and I was not able to come. They sent for me three times and finally I had to go and see the officer in the middle of the village. I was so sick that time and I could not even drink water. I was left behind when most males went out hiding as the troops arrived. I found all women were sitting together under the sun as well as some men in a separate place. They were Soe Rei aged 50, Hla Pe aged 30, Raw Dei aged 30, Plu Rei aged 20, Law Rei, one Shan boy, one unidentified man from another village and Khee Mai, a woman from my village. They were tied with rope and I was ordered to join them. The soldiers then also tied me up with rope. The soldiers did not ask us any questions about our background. They asked the village headman, whose face was slashed when his answers did not satisfy the troops. Then we were taken to Loilin and arrived in the afternoon. The military took us then to Loikaw by truck. People were put in separate places. Soe Rei, Hla Pe, Pla Rei and myself were put in to a cell at the military base of IB 54. There were four cells in one building full of men. In my room, there were eight men including the four of us. I did not know who they were and why they got arrested. The room was only good enough for four persons and it was so crowded because eight persons were put in one room. There was a toilet pot in one room and the soldiers allowed one time per day to go out to clean the toilet pot. When we were out, we found other prisoners in three other rooms.

The day after our arrival, we were singled out one by one and took into another room for interrogation. We were taken with our hands tied. Four soldiers started beating, punching and kicking as soon as I was in the room. They all were in plain clothes and asked my involvement in the KNPP and the place where KNPP was hiding. I actually did not know anything so I sincerely said I did not know. They accused me of organizing to buy weapons for the KNPP, which I actually did not do. They tortured me daily from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m in various forms. My other friends told me that they were given electric shock, but I was not. I think I was younger than the others. But I do not know exactly. The cruel treatment continued for three days. I was in so much pain and my face was swollen. I could not sleep due to the injuries I received. I spent two weeks there. Not a single bath was allowed. One plate of rice was given per meal and three meals per day. As the room was so crowded, we could not sleep comfortably. Space was only enough to sit down. The others spoke a different Karenni language so we could not communicate with each other.

After two weeks, we were transferred to a police station in Loikaw. The police did not provide any food for the inmates in the police station. But we were allowed to see visitors so they could send food. The police asked 18,000 *kyat* for each to be released. My relatives gave money for my release. When I arrived back, I found one 60-year-old elder left in the village. The village was like a ghost village. All the villagers had left because they were afraid of being arrested. So I followed after the villagers who left before me. I met my family on the way and it took two weeks to get here.

I don't want to go back because my life will be in great danger.

Interview: 55: Trafficking of women and children, persuasion to work in a brothel

Names: Hnin Hnin, Moe Moe Aye
Sex: Female
Ages: 15, 14
Ethnicity: Mon
Occupation of parents: Fisherman
Marital Status: Single
Address: Ohn Pin Su village, Kawkareik District, Karen State,
Education: Hnin Hnin has been to 2nd grade primary school,
and Moe Moe Aye has never been to school.
Date of Interview: April 20, 2000
Place of Interview: A monastery, Mae Sot, Tak, Thailand.
Source: KIC

Q: How did both of you arrive here?

A: We are friends and living in the same village. Our parents are fishermen. It is hard to survive. Sometimes, we didn't have enough food. Hnin Hnin has three brothes and sisters and Moe Moe Aye has four. Hnin Hnin is the eldest She has a brother and a sister. Moe Moe Aye has an elder sister and a younger brother and a sister . We used to go fishing with our fathers in the village and catch fish, prawns and lobsters and sell those at the market; and then buy rice, oil and some food for the whole family. Some days, it was O.K; but some days it wasn't. All the people in the village are fishermen. When Hnin Hnin turned ten years of age, her mother ran away from their family after arguing with her father. One of her younger brothers left with her mother, and Hnin Hnin remained with her father. When the time came when it was hard to survive in the village, one of the old men of the village told us that if we would like to go to Mae Sod with him, then he would find a job for us. We wanted to go, so we had to find 5,000 *kyat* for the cost of traveling. My father allowed me to sell my earrings and go with that old man. Before we arrived in Mae Sod , we stayed in Myawady about seven days. We had to stay inside all the time and got only one meal per day, because the old man complained that the money we had given him for travelling was not enough.

Q: How many people came with you and how long did it take?

A: There were some elder girls from nearby villages that came with us. They were three and we were two; all-together five of us. The trip didn't take long, but only staying in Myawady. We only knew each other after we met on the truck. Their ages were 18,20,22. They were also trying to find some jobs like us. We all had never been to Mae Sod before. When we arrived Myawady, the old man kept us at one of the houses that he knew, didn't allow us to go out, and fed us only one meal per day. Every day, he left in the very early morning and came back in the late evening, saying that he was trying to find jobs that we need. We got the meal only when he returned home, complaining how difficult it is to find work.

Q: Before you left the village, did the old man tell you what kind of jobs that you would be able to get here?

A: We were told that we would get work washing clothes, dishes, cleaning the house, and looking after babies, something like that . Once, we were at one of the houses, but the owner-woman only accepted the elder girl, age 20, from the five of us. She is pretty and the only one who got a job among us. The old man told us that he would try to find some jobs here in Mae Sod for both of us, and asked the elder two girls about going to Bangkok. They said they would go if they could get the jobs at the same house and not have to stay separately. He scolded them that they would not stay separately, and then sent them back to Myawady because both of them were afraid to stay separately. He continued to keep us at that house and told us that he would try to find some household jobs for us. One day, one woman came and looked at us, but she didn't like us. Then one day, he took us to the market and told us to wait for him near one of the shops while he went to buy some cigarettes. We waited and waited about 2 hours, then we knew he had left us. We didn't know the place. We did not learn anyone. We just walked past person after person.

Q: What happened then?

A: We didn't know where we were . And we both were very hungry too. We were talking in our Mon language. Then a girl much older than us came to us and spoke in Mon . She's also Mon . She asked us where we lived , and if we wanted to get jobs, make a lot of money, and stay with her. We asked what kind of job it was and where it was. She told us it was at one of the brothels. We told her we didn't want to do that. She still insisted that we go with her. We ran away from her and didn't know where to go. We didn't know how to get back to Myawady. We also heard policemen were arresting migrant workers from Burma. We were afraid, and just cried and cried. Then we met one young man. He is also Mon. We told him about our situation, and he took us to the monastery where he worked as a construction worker. He told the abbot about us, and abbot allowed us to stay at the monastery for a while until we had the chance to go back home.

Q: Do you still want to work here in Mae Sod or go back to your village?

A: We want to go back to our village, we will try to find some work there. We don't want to work here. Hnin Hnin was separated from her mother since she was young , so she wants to see her mother. She's heard that her mother is living in the town next to here. But people say there are some policemen watching and arresting people on the way there, so we don't dare to go there. Now, we will go back to our village. We can fish, plough, and plant.

Q: How will you go back without money?

A: We don't know. we don't have any money. We were starving, but we didn't dare to ask anybody for food. We just drank water to soothe our hunger. Now, here, we get enough food, and more than that sometimes we get some snacks, too. The abbot told us to go back home; that if we didn't we would experience trouble. We assured him that we are going back home. We will do what ever we are able to do in our village.