

The Mon Forum

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Some Acronyms in This Issue

- SPDC-** State Peace and Development Council,
- SLORC-** State Law and Order Restoration Council,
- IB -** Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*),
- LIB-** Light Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*),
- LID** Light Infantry Battalion (*of Burmese Army*)
- KNU-** Karen National Union,
- NMSP-** New Mon State Party,
- MDUF-** Mergui-Dawai United Front,

News

Forced Relocation of Paukpingwin Village and Population Displacement

(May, 2000)

Following the activities of a Mon armed group in many part of Ye and Yebyu Township areas, outside of NMSP control area, the Mon villagers in these areas have been constantly suffered from the SPDC troops' suspicion to them as rebel-supporters. These rebel troops also went around into Mon villages to get foods and fund from the villagers. Whenever the rebel soldiers went into a village, the villagers in it were accused as rebel-supporters and the headmen were always severely beaten. During late 1997 and early 1998, some villagers near the seacoast of Ye and Yebyu Township area were also arbitrary executed by SPDC soldiers with suspicion that they were rebel-supporters. Since then, the population displacement has happened in these areas and the villagers had to flee from one place to another to avoid mistreatment committed by SPDC soldiers.

Because of the previous participation of rebel leaders and their officers in a celebration of Mon National Day, which was held in Paukpingwin village, Yebyu Township, the population displacement has occurred again.



Displaced persons from Paukpingwin village moved to another areas



The conditions of IDPs, who displaced from various parts of Ye and Yebyu Township area

In February, most SPDC troops that took bases near Paukpingwin village were withdrawn and sent to frontlines in SPDC's offensives against KNU and God's Army. By taking that situation as a good opportunity, the Mon armed group leaders secretly negotiated with local village headmen and arranged for a Mon National Day celebration in Paukpingwin village, where the SPDC troops have firm control in the previous months. On February 20, when the rebel leaders attended the ceremony, SPDC troops delayed to stop and later when they heard about that, they angered to all village headmen, who attended the ceremony.

Therefore, the headmen and the villagers from many Mon villages who attended the ceremony were accused as rebel-supporters and some of them were arrested and tortured. Then, the troops from LIB No. 273 and IB No. 25 also blocked many villages and did not allow villagers to go to their farms. If someone was in the farm or in the plantation, he was accused as rebel-supporter and must be severely tortured. Due to this mis-treatment, the population displacement has happened since March.

Additionally, the SPDC troops also angered to headmen and villagers of Paukpingwin village for their acceptance of Mon National Day and allowed the participation of rebel leaders. Thus, LIB No. 273 commander Lt. Col. Htin Kyaw went to this village on May 17 and ordered all villagers to move out from their village within one week and he did not instruct where they must settle. He just ordered that after one week he would not like to see anyone in this village. This is the punishment to villagers.

So, over 1,000 population of Paukpingwin villagers has been displaced since the order from LIB No. 273 was ordered and nobody dared appealed to commander. The commander also accused the villagers that they are supporting the robber group (*according to SPDC troops' term*) and gave them foods, money and helped arranging for them to

participate in the Mon National Day ceremony.

Due to this order, the villagers suddenly moved from their villages to another villages. Very little number of villagers moved into their plantations, because even in the plantations, they were not safe. If they were arrested in the plantations they could be accused as rebel-supporters again and faced mis-treatment.

Many villagers decided to move into SPDC control areas. The villagers moved into Kalort, Koe-mile, Ye town in Ye Township area and to Aleskan and Yapu village of Yebyu Township area. Some of them also moved to NMSP control area. Normally, when the villagers moved to other areas, they had to abandon their houses, gardens, plantations, livestock, farms and other belongings. They could bring only some of their clothes and pots along with them.

By combining with the previous population displacement (*which was already described in the previous The Mon Forum, Issue No. 4/2000*), this is a serious and enormous displacement in Yebyu Township area in the dry season of 2000. In April, according our estimation, due to abuses related movement restriction and tortures with accusation of rebel-supporters, about 3,000- 5,000 population has been displaced and now it added with another 1,000 population. The SPDC is the main creator of the population displacement and forced them to leave from their native homes. And, the IDPs do not receive protection in the new places and less opportunity to get jobs for regular income.

Normally, those IDPs have to stay with their relatives in villages or towns in government control areas. But the IDPs in the SPDC control areas might have to seek jobs, as day labourers to get income and feed their families. Anyhow all IDPs in every areas must face various difficulties for survival.



SPDC Soldiers Killed Mon Villager During Military Operation

(April, 2000)

On April 6, 2000, when a military operation led by Second-Commander of LIB No. 416, had a duty to launch offensives against KNU in Kya Inn Seiki Township area and Three Pagoda Pass areas, the SPDC soldiers in that battalion also killed one Mon villager and shot another Mon villagers to get severe wounds.

During this military operation, when the troops arrived near Waithalee village of Kya Inn Seiki Township, Karen State, one soldier who had duty in the front point also met a Mon villager, Nai Myint Aung (about 35 years old), and asked valuable watch from that man, who was collecting vegetables in his farm. The Mon man refused to give the watch and had strong argument to soldier. At the end, the man also accused to soldier that he acted like a robber or a theft. So, the soldier angered to him and shot him with his rifle gun with 3-4 rounds bullets and directly hit the man. The man also lied down onto ground and when he was in dying condition, the other two soldiers arrived and the first soldiers informed to them that the man was the informer to KNU troops nearby. Additionally, the two soldiers also stabbed with knife put at the points of rifle guns to the dying man. So, the man died on the spot with serious wounds and plenty of blood.

Then, the soldiers also informed to their commander that the Mon man was KNU supporter and so they killed him. The commander did not inquire to the soldiers and believe the story without strong evidence. The soldiers also told to commander that there were some KNU troops nearby and they also shelled with motor to the small forests nearby. Then, the soldier also took the watch from the man and left him behind, and then, the military patrol moved to east.

On the same day, before the military operation arrived near Badar-gyi village of Kya Inn Seiki Township, the soldiers also met a Mon man, Nai Thaw Aye (about 28 years old), while he was holding a home made hunter gun, and shot to him with accusation of he was KNU soldier. After he lied into ground with wounds, the commander stopped his soldiers from shooting him.

After hearing gun sound, the village headmen and villagers from Badar-gyi village came out from village and met their villager was in the dying situation. They also complained to the commander that that man was not KNU soldier, but only ordinary villager. And the commander also believed to the villagers that he was an ordinary village and allowed them to bring him into village. Then, the villagers and his parents brought him to Kya Inn Seiki hospital to receive proper treatment. However, the troops did not provide any cost for treatment.

Actually, most parts of Kya Inn Seiki Township area is under Black Area or Free Fire Zone and the soldiers

could have special opportunity to shoot anyone whom they met in the jungle or outside of the villages. In first case of shooting to Nai Myint Aung, a soldier just would like to take a valuable watch from a villager and he took this opportunity and shoot to him until died. In the second case, as the soldiers saw the man was holding a home made gun, they shot him to get serious wounds with suspicion of rebel soldier.

Normally, in the black area, the villagers are always restricted from their movements and sometimes, the battalions or military operation nearby officially barred the villagers with order to not go to their farms, plantations and other types of work places. Or, even the villagers did not receive any order from the battalions or military operation, they have to be very careful while they are on the way to their work places or in the forests. If they are not in the plain farms, or if they are in the forests, they are more vulnerable to face shooting by the soldiers.



Conscription of Trucks and Use of Porters for the Military Purpose of LID No. 88

(April, 2000)

Since January until April 2000, when the Burmese Army's LID No. 88 launched the military offensives against KNU in Three Pagoda Pass area and along Zemi river area, the soldiers not only conscripted the ferry cars and trucks to carry ammunitions, soldiers and other supplies, but also arrested many civilian porters during this military operation. For nearly four months period, this army division has taken responsibilities in clearing the rebel roots in the areas and the abuses against the local civilians have been widespread.

On April 26, the troops of LIB No. 88 took temporary bases near Yetagun and Anan-gwin villages, and stopped all passenger ferry cars and took them for their military purposes. About 8 ferry cars, which came together from Thanbyuzayat town of Mon State with full of passengers to proceed Three Pagoda Pass, were stopped and the soldiers ordered to all passengers to leave from the ferries. Thus, the passengers who paid all amount of ferry costs to drivers lost chance to travel to reach their destination. Similarly, the soldiers also took another 4 trucks, which loaded goods from Three Pagoda Pass, especially Thailand's goods, and use them to carry their soldiers, ammunitions, food supplies and others, when they moved to Three Pagoda Pass. The soldiers also ordered the truck drivers to load down all of their goods from trucks and took trucks on the half ways.

On the other hand, when a passenger traveled from Thanbyuzayat to Three Pagoda Pass with ferry, they also pay various types of tax to many military outposts of Burmese Army, which opened in many places along the road. Some-



The civilian porters with LID No. 88 military operation on Three Pagoda Pass-Thanbyuzayat motor road

times, when they were unlucky, although they paid tax to armies, their passenger ferries were taken by another military operations. One passenger at least have to pay about 1,000 Kyat totally along the road to many army checkpoints. Even the military operation of LID No. 88 have not taken permanent base on the road, they frequently have passed this road.

Generally, the passengers, truck and ferry drivers and traders are quite disappointed with the acts of the military operation. Sometimes, soldiers also arrested the passengers as civilian porters or they looted passengers' belongings. The travelers always felt unsafe in traveling in this road, and prayed to not face with military operation.

Besides the troops from LID No. 88 taking trucks and ferries to carry their ammunitions, soldiers and supplies, and use them along motor road, the troops also arrested many civilian porters from various villages when they used foot-paths in traveling in the rural areas to carry all their supplies and ammunitions.

During from February to April, 2000, when the troops under the command of LID No. 88 launched a military patrol to attack and clear the KNU forces, they arrested many Mon villagers from rural villages. As an evidence, during February to April, when the troops launched patrol along Zami river, the soldiers entered into 5 Mon and Karen villages, such as Kyauk-balu, Khasaw-lae, Hniten, Kyaik-san and Kyaik-round, regularly and arrested all men and women in these villages to carry ammunitions and other supplies. At the beginning, the troops came and arrested only men in villages, used them for two weeks to one month as civilian porters, and released them. Later,

due to hardship in the porter service, many men fled outside of villages to escape from the arrest of porters and the troops were angry when they got small numbers of men. Then, in the later entry to villages, the soldiers arrested all men and women as porters.

Similarly, on April 17, when the troops went into three Karen villages, Thapyin-zone, None-panane and Maw-lone-daing, the soldiers arrested both men and women in the villages and used them as porters. Sometimes, when the troops passed in forests or rice-farms, they also arrested men whom they met. On April 20, 2000, when a military column, LIB No. 541 under the command of LIB No. 88, passed in a small forest near Thanbaya village of Kya Inn Seikyi Township, 5 sawyers, Nai Aung (45 years old), Nai Thar Htee (35 years old), Nai Min Naing (31 years old), Nai Mon Tun Ong (30 years old), and Nai Pwa Gyi (30 years old) were arrested by soldiers and they were used as porters to ammunitions and food supplies. After one week in porter service for LIB No. 541, when the troops arrived near Thanbyuzayat town, they were released.

During the porter service, the soldiers forced the porters to carry 30-50 Kilograms weight and normally, they have to walk with that weight for 10-15 hours per day. The soldiers also gave them a little amount of foods. So, many villagers who were in the porter service got sickness and sometimes, they were left behind by soldiers or sometimes were killed. The suffering of porters in the military service is harder than other type of forced labour.



Report

The Suffering of Mon Villagers in Yebyu Township: Forced Labour and Porter Service for No. 8 Command

The background of No. 8 Command Deployment

Under the command of the southernmost SPDC's military command, Coastal Region Military Command led by Maj. General Sit Maung, a separate military command is formed with all Light Infantry Battalions and it is led by Second-Commander of Coastal Region Military Command. The sub or separate military command is known as No. 8 Operation Administrated Command (*also known as No. 8 Command*) and it is under the command of Coastal Region Military Command and its main duty is especially to handle the military operation against the rebel troops in Tavoy District area of Tenasserim Division.

In this No. 8 Command, there are twelve battalions comprising and these are LIB No. 401, 402 to 410, LIB No. 273 and LIB No. 282. These battalions have headquarters in Yebyu and Tavoy township areas and therefore, their military activities are also conducting in Yebyu and Tavoy township areas, while LIB No. 273 and LIB No. 282 mainly have to take responsibility to take the security of the on-shore Yadana gas pipeline. Regularly, this military command also had to take responsibility to operate the military offensives against the KNU, one Mon armed group and MDUF (Mergui-Dawai United Front) troops which have been active both mountainous and coastal region of Tavoy district (*see in the map*).

On the other hand, to safeguard the motor road, railway road and gas pipeline, it is quite important for No. 8 Command to prevent from the rooting of rebel organizations in the villages and in the whole area. So, under the direct command of No. 8 Command, the local military battalions had to launch the military patrol regularly to clear all roots the possible rebel bases. Besides these battalions had to take security for the area, in the other time, they also have to take part in the implementation of government's development projects, which directly support SPDC firm control of the area. SPDC also gave order to military battalions to build the roads that could support for their better communication and to create paddy growing farms or fruit plantations, that could support for their battalion fund and foods. In any building of new roads or widening of old road, or exploring the new lands, the authorities and the military battalions have constantly conscripted the local villagers including Mon, Karen and Tavoy people to contribute unpaid labour.

During the construction of 110 mile-long Ye-Tavoy motor road from 1994 to 1998, the government's military battalions from No. 8 Command had conscripted many hundreds of thousands of civilians to contribute unpaid labour. After this road construction, No. 8 Command continuously broadens the motor road from Ye to Tavoy again in 1999. Since most parts of Ye-Tavoy railway road were built with the manual labour, without help of the modern heavy machines, the embankment was not strong and was ruin every year in every rainy season. To re-build the collapsed embankment and bridges in railway, the villagers have been forced to contribute unpaid labour again.

The other regular human rights abuses violated by SPDC battalions are the arrest of civilians and used them as porters. In both No. 8 Command's military offensives or the area patrol, the local military battalions have used the villagers to be porters to carry ammunitions and food supplies for them. The life of the civilian porters is generally quite hard during the porter service for any SPDC battalions. Some porters also died in the battlefields and while some died after they arrived back to their homes.

Additionally, as SPDC instructed all military commands including No. 8 Command, to create self-reliance or to not rely on the higher military command, the battalions under the command of No. 8 Command has continuously collected various type of fund from the civilians and sometimes, the battalions also looted food supplies especially rice and live-stocks from the civilians in the rural areas.

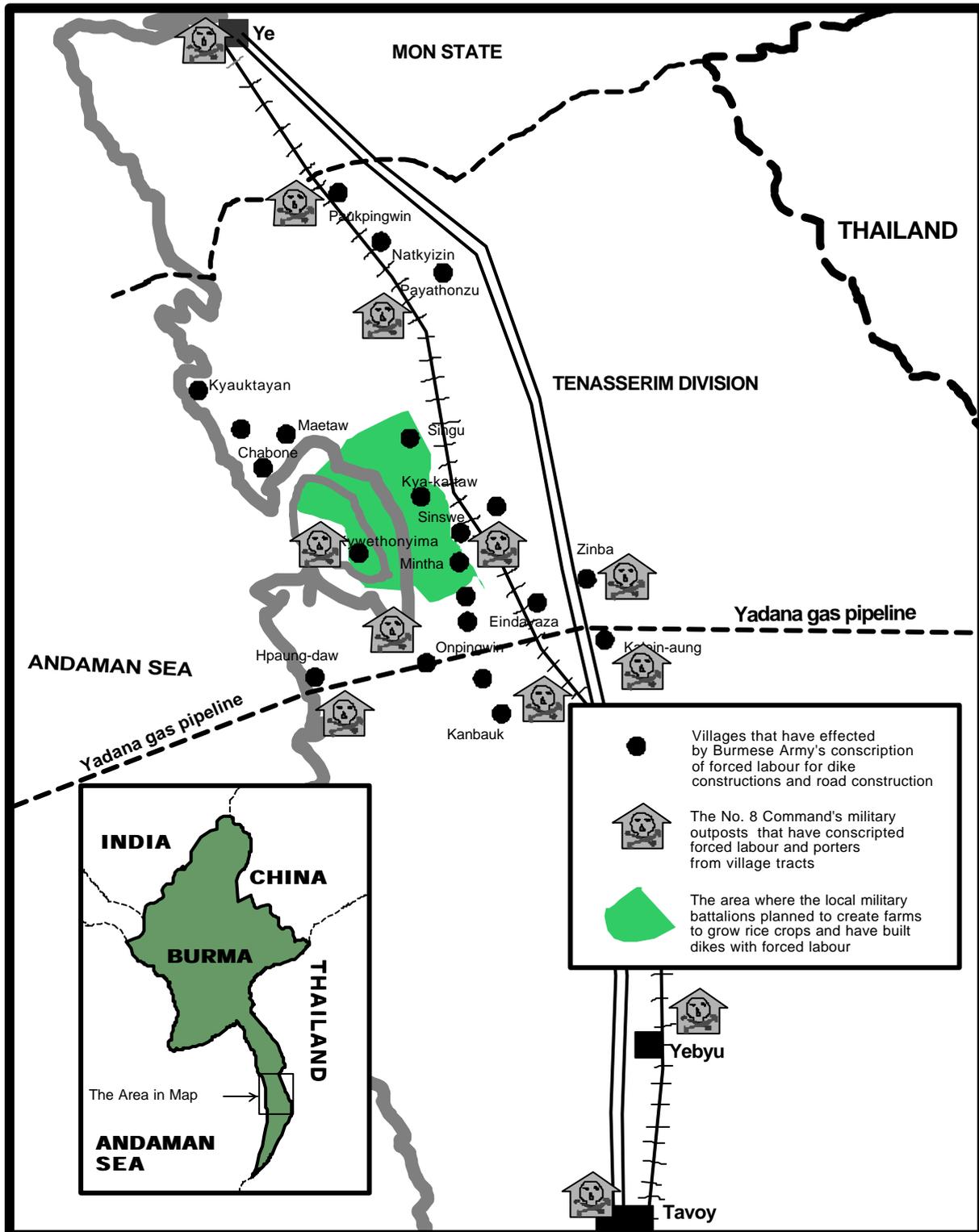
The following accounts are the information about human rights violations such as (1) conscription of forced labour; and (2) arrest of civilian porters for military purposes, committed by the battalions under the command of No. 8 Command during 1998, 1999 and the beginning of 2000.

Conscription of Forced Labour

Before the end of 1998, No. 8 Command received an order from Rangoon and Coastal Region Military Command, to broaden Ye-Tavoy motor road and also received some budget from the government with 2 million Kyat

per mile. France's Oil and Gas Company, Total, also provided some fund to No. 8 Command to build some parts of the road. In broadening Ye-Tavoy motor road, although the local military battalions received the budget, these amounts of budget were limited to complete the construction of the set length of road and thus, the soldiers also conscripted many hundreds of civilians from the villages situated along motor road and not so far from the motor road. In this road construction, the soldiers instructed to clear 3 feet width in each side of the former embankment, collect the stones to lay on the road, crush stones into small pieces, fill with small pieces of stones, dig the water canals alongside of the roads and others.

Similarly, the Ye-Tavoy railway embankment was regularly ruin in every season, and the villagers close to the



Map of Yebyu Township area and the conscription of labour and porter

railway were always forced to rebuild this road. In every rainy season, because of rain water and flood, the railway embankment was easily collapsed and many parts of the road were destroyed. While the embankment was being built, the battalions only used manual labour of the local villagers but less use of machines in the construction. Thus, the embankment was not strong enough to be available for all seasons to use the train. During rainy season, when the road was destroyed, the local villagers were always forced to rebuild. It was also a punishment by soldiers with accusation that the villagers had not built the strong embankment in the previous years while the Ye-Tavoy railway was in the constructing process.

Some villagers were forced to contribute unpaid labour in both broadening construction of Ye-Tavoy motor road and the repairing of Ye-Tavoy railway embankment. Generally, the villagers have to build the railway road or motor road every year.

According to one villager from Yapu village,

“Our villagers have to work both railway and motor road construction in this year (1999). During dry season, the village headman instructed the villagers that the military required 7 people from 7 families to work in broadening construction of Ye-Tavoy motor road. Thus, we have to go to the construction sites at least one round from 5-7 days within one month. For nearly five months we have to work in the broadening motor road and when the rainy season started for three weeks, we heard some parts of railway road was ruin. And, nearly half of the village families had to go and repair Ye-Tavoy railway. Thus, we have very limited time to do our own works.”

Besides the construction of road repairs in the whole area of Yebyu Township, No. 8 Command its military battalions to explore new lands to grow rice, rubber and fruits, which could support the local military battalions for self-reliance. In doing so, the local military battalions required to find the new possible lands for farming or planting fruits, to clear these lands to become a proper used lands and grow the plants or paddy. Since mid-1998, some battalions under No. 8 Command constructed four water dikes along the coastal areas of Yebyu Township. To get a water dike, first the army had to build a long embankment and closed all rivers and streams in the up side of the required lands. Four dikes, which are situating, near Singu, Hmaw-gyi, Mintha and Kwethmo-nyi-ma villages were built for nearly 8-9 months with contribution of unpaid labour of villagers from 20 villages of Mintha, Kwetho-nyi-ma, Natkyisin and Yapu village tracts of the township. The villagers themselves had to construct embankment, closing the river and streams and other works. The army battalions never offered any payment or assistance such as foods and others. After the dikes were built, the villagers again were instructed to clear lands for paddy farms. It also took about one month and so during the rainy season of 1999 (from June to October), the military battalions from LIB No. 410, No. 273 and No. 406 could grow paddy in these new farms. If one villager could not go to work-site for one round (about one week) he/she must have to pay the concerned military battalions with 3, 000 Kyat as a ransom. (*The Conscripted of forced labour for dike construction already reported in The Mon Forum, Issue No. 2/99.*)

According to a villager from Sin-swe village of Mintha village tract of Yebyu township, who had the experience in contributing unpaid labour in the dike construction:

“I think when the last year rainy season started (about June, 1998), the soldiers from LIB No. 410 came into our village and called a meeting with all villagers. One commander informed us that the army would build a water dike near Singu village, all households in the villages must go and build the embankment first and then close the river and streams to keep water. Then we understood that the army tried to create paddy farms. The village headmen also managed as rotation basis in sending the villagers to the construction sites everyday. Every time, on behalf of my family, I had to go to construction site once or twice a month. Firstly, we had to build a long and 6 feet width embankment and secondly we were instructed to close river and streams with two roles of wooden poles and filled earth between them to get a 6 feet width embankment. All the construction works had been done in the rainy season and some parts of newly built embankment were destroyed at the end of rainy season and the villagers have to repair them again. Then, the villagers were constantly instructed to clear the lands, which were needed by the army to grow paddy.”

Similarly, in October 1999, some parts of embankment of water dike for LIB No. 273 near Kwe-tho-nyima village were also destroyed. Thus, during October and November 1999, LIB No. 278 also conscripted many hundreds of villagers from Kwe-tho-nyima, Cha-bone, Moe-taung, Ah-byu, Ah-byaik and Kyauktayan villages in Kwe-tho-nyima village tract to contribute labour in repairing the embankment of water dike. This water dike was built during the period from mid-1998 to early 1999 and LIB No. 273 battalion could explore about 200-300 acres of lands to grow paddy.

While the battalions under command of No. 8 Command, such as LIB No. 273, No. 406 and No. 273 were exploring the lands along the coastal area and down side of the concerned water dikes, No. 8 Command also took about 4, 000 acres of land in east side of Ye-Tavoy motor road, in areas between Kalein-aung and Yapu villages. These

lands are forest lands and No. 8 Command took these lands and distributed them to its military battalions to create fruit and rubber plantations. Although, the Command confiscated a large acres of forest lands, they could not clear them all and some military battalions could take only about 1, 000 acres of lands and prepare to grow fruits.

In the period from June to August 1999, in the rainy season, No. 8 Command to the battalions to clear the lands and grow fruit trees in the new lands. Then, the local battalions also ordered the local village headmen to clear the lands, to bring small fruit plants from their homes and grow in the new lands. The villagers from three village tracts in Township, such as Mintha, Yapu and Kalein-aung were constantly ordered by the Command to contribute free labour and grow fruit trees in the battalions owned lands.

Among three village tracts, the villagers from Mintha village tract have been suffer more than other two village tracts. The army commanders from various battalions had instructed the villagers from Mintha, Legyi, Moe-gyi, Sin-swe, Sat-thaw and Ye-ngan-gyi villages that each household in all villages must bring 2 years old 100 betel-nut tree plants, 50 cashew nut tree plants, and 5 coconut tree plants to these new lands and let the villages grow them. In doing so, the villagers themselves had to take responsibility to clear lands, dig small holes and plant the small trees. To complete all of these works, one family had to send at least two persons and they could complete that piece of works within one week. The villagers themselves bought small plants of fruit trees for army plantations. The army also instructed the villagers that if the plants died, they must have to replace it. So, after one month, the villagers had to come to plantation sites again and to check the plant conditions again. They also replaced new plants in the holes of dead trees.

Besides the villagers were forced to contribute unpaid labour in projects that supporting the battalions and No. 8 Command, for better communication and benefit for army, sometimes, the villagers were also used to build the roads that directly supporting for the better facilitating for the security of Yadana gas pipeline, which is situating in Yebyu Township area and operated by the multinational oil and gas companies, Unocal, Total and Premier Oil.

Since the end of 1999, until February 2000, the local villagers near Yadana on-shore gas pipeline area, had to contribute free labour in building a six miles-long road from The-chaung to Kin-taung road, under the order of LIIB No. 273, which received a contract from France oil and gas company, Total.

For nearly four months, without using any type of machines, the soldiers from LIIB No. 273 had forced the villagers from The-chaung village tract to contribute free labour in building this 6 miles long motor road. In The-chaung village tract, there are totally 6 villages and they are The-chaung, Talaing-myaw, Thingun-taw, Taput-chaung,



Conscription of forced labour in Ye-Tavoy motor road

Kadot-chaung, and Kin-taung. In these villages, there are over 700 households and the population and Mon and Tavoyan inhabitants.

In constructing this motor road, LIB No. 273 has used about 30-50 villagers every day and the village headmen from the above mentioned villages had to provide the villager labourers with a rotation basis. When the army ordered, every household had to send at least one villager and depending on the pieces of works in the construction, the 30-50 villagers every day had to work for 3-5 days in one round of conscription. Types of works in the construction are, digging the earth, carrying dusts and stones, collecting stones and crush them into small pieces, and building the embankment.

In any conscription of forced labour for No. 8 Command and its military battalions, the villagers had to bring their own foods and tools. Many women and children are also conscripted by soldiers in contributing forced labour in the construction, because many men or the heads of the families work in the farms, or in plantations, or in sea for fishing, to get income and foods for the survival of the whole families. However, the army did not select women and children in construction sites, but took all villagers, including over 50% of women and children. Sometimes, when the men are used as porters for one military battalion, the women and their children also have to contribute unpaid labour for another battalions' road construction or exploration of new lands. These are the endless stories happened in Yebyu Township, the northern area of Tenasserim Division.

Porter Service for No. 8 Command and Its Military Battalions

Another type of using forced labour in Yebyu township area is arrest of villagers to use them as civilian porters to carry ammunitions and food supplies during No. 8 Command launches offensives against the rebel troops or when the Command's military battalions operate military patrol around the area. According to agreement with oil and gas companies, No. 8 Command also had to provide 3 to 5 battalions of armed forces for the companies and their gas pipelines depending on the security conditions. In Kanbauk area, there are three oil and gas companies, France's Total, US's Unocal and UK's Premier Oil, and No. 8 Command mainly has to take responsibilities for security of company personnel, facilities and gas pipeline. Thus, No. 8 Command permanently provides LIB No. 282 to take security along the route of pipeline from Kalein-aung to Thailand border, Ban Ei-taung. LIB No. 273 battalion also had to take the security of the company bases and their facilities to prevent from the attack of the rebel troops. Normally, No. 8 Command changed the battalions every three months to take inner and outer security of the companies and their pipelines. Some battalions also took security along the coastal areas, by cooperating with SPDC navy forces, to prevent the possible attacks from the sea to the pipelines and company bases.

Whenever No. 8 Command or its military battalions operate patrol for the security of a specific area or gas pipeline area, the battalions always take civilian porters from every village in the area. Thus, every men between 12 years and 70 years old had experience in doing porter service at least one time for one battalion under the command of No. 8 Command.

To get the required number of porters, the battalion commanders also instructed all village headmen in the villages to prepare for a ready to provide porters for the battalion. Depending on the village size, the headmen always have to provide 2-10 porters. So, the headmen have to manage on a rotation basis and they had to arrange to be ready to provide porters when the troops came into their villages. The headmen have to stop the required number of men to not go to their farms and other work places. Those men have to wait in the villages until the troops came into villages. After one battalion took these porters, the headmen have to arrange another group of porters again to provide another battalions or the same battalion's another troop columns. Sometimes, when the headmen could not manage to provide the set number of civilian porters, they were also slapped or beaten and mis-treated by soldiers.

This regular civilian porters had to go with military battalions for at least 3 days to one week when the battalions launched military patrol in a specific area. When the battalions arrived into another villages, if they got another number of porters, they also released the porters from the previous villages. Then, the porters have to find the way to return homes by themselves. In conscription of civilians to be porters, No. 8 Command or its military battalion never paid for their labour.

In the emergency situation, when the army planned to launch massive offensives against the rebel troops, the battalions did not wait to get the regular porters and suddenly entered villages and arrested all able-bodied men, sometimes also arrested children between 12 and 18 years old, and forced them to carry ammunitions and food supplies up to battle fields. For such porters, they soldiers would not release them until the military operation was ended. Additionally, when the army launched patrol along gas pipeline, the soldiers also used porters for several days. Sometimes, if the troops took bases near pipeline, the porters were forced to stay with them for several days and months.

Cruel treatment by soldiers to the weak civilian porters is also a well-known abuse in Burma. During the porter

service, if the porters could not walk or too weak to carry over weighted load of ammunitions such as motor shells or parts of artillery guns, they were also beaten, kicked and sometimes killed by soldiers.

As an instance,

In September 1999, a military battalion under the command of No. 8 Command, LIB No. 408 went into Mingal village and arrested four men as porters and brought them many days. At that time, LIB No. 408 had to launch patrol in the southern part of Yebyu Township to launch offensives against KNU and God's Army troops based in the border area. In the frontline, one porter, Nai Nyunt was quite weak to walk on and the soldiers shout him to continue walking. When he could not walk, the soldiers also stabbed his body with knives. He suffered with wounds and at the end the soldiers left him behind. Then, he tried to return his home. Similarly another porter from the same village Nai Shin (52 years old) could not walk because he got fever due to several days walking. The soldiers severely beat him and left him behind. When he lost conscienceness, another villagers brought him back home. Because of severe beating, he suffered from internal pains and, he died after he arrived home. His family could not get time to provide better treatment to him.

There had been many sad stories of the porters. Normally, the porter service for the military battalion the most terrible abuses among various types of forced labour. Sometimes, those porters also faced fighting in the battlefields and they were as human-shields to protect the soldiers from hitting the bullets or were used to clear mines.

Before the end of 1999, when No. 8 Command and its military battalions and other battalions launched offensives against God's Army base, many hundred of villagers were arrested to use them as civilian porters in the battlefields. Many porters were brought by the SPDC troops for nearly two months, some could escape from horrible conditions in the battlefields while some of them were killed and disappeared.

According to a 39 years old returned porter:

"When (in the first week of October 1999) I was in the village (Chaung-phar village of Yebyu Township), waited for to serve as a regular porter for LIB No. 273, another battalion, I think, LIB No. 410 rushed into village and arrested all able-bodied in the village. As I thought the troops are from LIB No. 273, I did not run. I was arrested with another 4 men in the village and brought away by soldiers and then we knew that we were used as porters for offensives, not for military patrol near our village. Three of villagers from our village transferred to another battalions by LIB No. 410 and two of us remained.

"After about 10 days walking, we reached in the jungle area after climbing mountains and the fighting with Karen soldiers started. Whenever the fighting happened, the soldiers also pushed us in the front and used us as shields. Then, the soldiers hid and took shields under the trees and shot their enemy. One time, when the fighting started the soldiers pushed 5 porters including me in the front, and two porters died in there because



Conscription of civilian porters *the common abuse violated by the Burmese Army's battalions and commands*

of bullet hitting from Karen soldiers. I was so frightened. Luckily, the Burmese troops retreated from that battlefields and I tried to escape from there.”

During the porter service, the beating, kicking, slapping and other mis-treatment to the porters who could not walk or weak, are the common abuses daily happening the battlefields. Furthermore, as the army carried food supplies for many days in the battlefields, the soldiers always were afraid of being shortage of foods during offensives and fed only insufficient foods to porters.

The above porter also added that:

During offensives, we had walk in the jungle, climb the mountains and walked along streams for nearly 14 hours every day and we remained very less time to sleep. Although we were very tired, the soldiers gave us very small amount of only rice, but not curry. The porters cooked the rice and curry and the soldiers took them first and they gave porters the remaining little amounts of foods. Thus, the porters became weaker and weaker every day. When we could not walk or dropped the loads from our shoulders, we were severely beaten or kicked.

In the porter service, the soldiers forced the porters to carry about 30-50 kilograms weights for 12-15 hours within one day without taking any rest. The soldiers always shout to the porters that “it is battlefields, don’t slow and walk on” and forced the porters to walk continuously until they reached to their destination.

For a regular porter, if he refused to serve as porters for a military battalion, he had to pay fine for that battalion. The battalion always takes regular porter from one village at least for 5-7 days and so they also take fine about 2500-3500 Kyat for one round of porter service. If the village headmen could not manage to provide the set number of porters, they had to collect fine from the ones who could not serve the service and gave that fine to the army commanders soon after they arrived into villages.

If a village headman could not manage to get porters and/or to pay fine to the army battalion, he must be severely beaten by soldiers and commanders. Sometimes, the headmen were also killed for their failure to provide the set number of porters or the set amount of payment.

As an instance,

In September, 1999, due to the regular conscription of civilian porters from Zeya village of Yebyu township, the villagers had no time to work their own works. Thus, many men escaped from their village and did not wait for their rounds of porter service to LIB No. 410. In the second week of that month, when the battalion arrived into village, the village chairman, Nai Pyu (43 years old), could not manage to provide the set number of porters. Then the commander also asked for fine, 3, 000 Kyat per head of five regular porters. He said that the villagers for porters already left from village and they did not give payment for porter fee. The soldiers angered to him and severely beat him. They accused him as rebel-supporter because of his failure to provide porters to them. They also stabbed his stomach with knives and at the end he died with a lot blood.

When a young nephew of the chairman, Nai Myat (25 years old), saw the inhuman view of killing his uncle, he also ran out from the village. Then the soldiers also quickly followed behind him and caught him back to village. The soldiers also accused him that he was trying to bring KNU troops to attack them. About 5 o’clock in the evening, after severe torturing, the soldiers brought him outside of the village and killed him by shooting.

Sometimes, when the fighting happened near a village, all villagers were accused as rebel-supporters and some villagers including headmen must be beaten for their failure to inform about the activities of rebel troops. And, many men in the village must be arrested and were also used as porters for many days by soldiers as a punishment to them.

As an instance,

When the fighting near Zeya village, Yebyu Township, between No. 8 Command’s battalion and KNU troops, in October 1999, all villagers from that village were arrested and the soldiers used them as porters. When they passed from one village to another, they also used the villager porters as human-shields to prevent the attack from the rebel. They also forced the villagers to show the safe roads to reach their nearest military outpost.

In any situation of the porter service, the civilians are always suffered from mis-treatment of soldiers and the killing of the porters always happened in the battlefields of southern part of Burma.

Conclusion

Under the SPDC slogan that the government has conducted various types of development project in rural and border areas, the civilians in the concerned area also faced conscription of forced labour. Actually the military government has very limited budget and they always adopted insufficient budget to their battalions or Commands to

implement the development projects, such as building roads, bridges, dikes and others, but the concerned army commanders were instructed to complete implementation of the projects. Because of lack of budget and heavy constructing machines, the concerned battalions and commands again forced the civilians to contribute free labour in the all construction of development projects.

Similarly, No. 8 Command also receives one type of development project to be implemented in its own control areas. Such development project is normally supporting the military purposes of No. 8 Command and they must not refuse. Then, it ordered the area army commanders to conscript the villagers to contribute unpaid labour.

At the same time, during every dry season in Burma (*from October to May*), whenever the Burmese Army launched military offensives against KNU and other rebel groups, the villagers from the same village communities also have to serve as porters for soldiers.

As a result of endless conscription of forced labour and porter, the villagers have no enough time to work in their own farms, plantations, fishing and other works. The army also disrupts the community practices of the survival. Many villagers lose crops during harvest season because they are absent to work their works. Besides the time, the battalions always demand various types of tax and fine from the villager and nearly all income flow into the pockets of the commanders or into the battalion fund.

At the end, some villagers, who are really poorest in the communities, have to leave from their village first because they could not survive longer in the villages. Then, another class of villagers who owned some lands, good houses and gardens have to leave from the villages. Some poor villages of fishing communities are quite poor and the population in the villages gradually reduced and moved to other places, where they expected less suffering. Some of them moved to Thailand, while some of them moved to towns or villages under SPDC control and many others moved into rebel control areas. Therefore, the population displacement also occurred due to constant conscription of forced labour and forced porter.



Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1994, by a group of young Mon people. The main objectives of HURFOM are:

- To monitor human rights situations in Mon territory and other areas southern part of Burma,

- To protect and promote internationally recognized human rights in Burma,

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM has produced "The Mon Forum" newsletters monthly and sometimes it has been delayed because we wait to confirm some information. We apologize for the delay.

However, we also invite your feedbacks on the information we described in each newsletter and if you know anyone who would like to receive the newsletter, please send name and address to our address or fax number or e-mail as below:

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