

# The Mon Forum

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## Some Acronyms in This Issue

|             |                                |
|-------------|--------------------------------|
| IDP-        | Internally Displaced Persons   |
| IB-         | Infantry Battalion             |
| LIB-        | Light Infantry Battalion       |
| KNU-        | Karen National Union           |
| KNLA-       | Karen National Liberation Army |
| NMSP-       | New Mon State Party            |
| MNLA-       | Mon National Liberation Army   |
| Pyithusit - | People' Militia' force         |

## News

### Serious Human Rights violation persist in Southern Ye Township

November 2006, Khaw-Zar Sub-Town, Ye Township, Mon State

HURFOM has accepted an ongoing flow of information from southern part of Ye Township regarding detention and torture abuses committed by the army battalions operating in that area.

According to HURFOM field reporter, on November 9, five villagers including a 14-year old boy were detained and tortured for two days by IB No. 31 of Khaw-Zar Sub-Town in connection with the Mon Splinter armed group led by Nai Shan Shae.

Again, on November 15, another two villagers from Yin-Yae village, Kaw-Zar sub-Township were cruelly tortured during their sentry duty by the Burmese troops of IB No-31 by the reason of missing to account the information of Mon rebel groups who entered the village to collect food supplies from villagers. Captain Tin Hlaing and his troops from IB No. 31 arrested and tortured these two villagers and beat them several times on their back, according to eyewitness.

“They arrested Nai +++ and Nai +++ ++, took along with them and beat them during questioning inside Army barracks. “They asked about the activities of the Mon splinter group. They beat them until



Troops of villagers who are escaping to the Thai-Burma due to Burmese Army's offensives against Mon rebel group in Southern Ye Township, Mon State

## NMSP Ceasefire is Unstable

After the visit of SPDC military commanders and it's troops near and into the Headquarters of New Mon State Party and nearby a Mon refugee resettlement site, Bee Ree, there has been serious concerns among the displaced communities, education and health workers and civilians alike that how long the ceasefire between NMSP and SPDC will last.

Ceasefire between NMSP and the military SPDC has taken place over 11 years and it was the first time in October, SPDC troops approached into the NMSP's strongest ceasefire zone. Many analysts believed the SPDC's visit into the area was 'not sincere' and it must have some plans to destroy the Mon armed political party, after some disagreement in the National Convention. The NMSP reduced it's representatives during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> round of NC in 2006 from full representatives to observers.

If the ceasefire breaks the fighting starts again, there will be many suffering among the displaced population in NMSP's ceasefire zones. They might have to flee from their displaced locations again and are not sure whether Thai government will provide shelters or not? They may suffer from human rights violations, food-shortage and health problems.

It is an urgent for the International Community to push for the tri-partite political dialogue in order to stop all types of violence among the armed oppositions and military government in Burma.

they gave information about the rebels," said an anonymous eyewitness source. There are also unconfirmed accounts of villagers from Mee-Taing-Tat village being detained.

Since the first week in November, 2006, residents from each village who live under Kaw-Zar Sub-Township were ordered by IB No. 31 to provide intelligence regarding rebel groups operating along in that area.

"We have to guard on a rotational basis of 21 people per night. They (Burmese soldiers) ordered us to hunt for the rebel groups and the unfamiliar person from other places." A source said.

It was also reported that on November 15, 2006, Nai Tin Tun (not real name) who had been accused of the supporter of Mon rebel group, fled to Thailand for fear of torture according to the reporter.

"The reason he fled was related to the death of Nai Chan Thein, the Chairman of Khaw-Zar Peace and Development Council. Nai Chan Thein was assassinated by the unknown armed group on the last October 4 and Commander Myint Swe of Infantry Battalion No. 31 suspected Nai Tin Tun as an informer of the rebel group and he was detained and tortured at the sub-town's police station for eight days. Then, he was later released on a bail of Kyat 400,000. After that, the commander Myint Swe in-charge of the area came to his house to

arrest him again. But he was already fled to Thailand," said a Mon social worker who met him in Thailand.

Many inhabitants from southern part of Ye district came to Thailand with bitter experiences with the Burmese Army. They were often accused as rebel supporters, were tortured and their belongings including houses were confiscated and burnt down, the source added.

Southern Ye area is listed by the Burma Army as a black region and civilians face horrible under the name of military offensive to wipe out the Mon rebel armed groups. According to the HURFOM database, approximately about 500 persons already fled from their villages in Khaw-Zar Sub-Town during the last five months ago and most of entered to Thailand and some of them decided to survive in refugee camps near the Thai-Burma border.

## Land confiscation keeps on in Southern Ye Township

Ye Township, November 2006

Land confiscation has been going on in southern part of Mon State. On November 20, 2006, it was reported that Ye town based Infantry Battalion No. 61 have been confiscating more than forty five acres

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**Urgent Release**  
By the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) – Burma  
On  
Massive Arbitrary Arrest and Torturing in Southern  
Part of Ye Township

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In order to cut off support from civilians to a small group of Mon rebels in the southern part of Ye Township, Mon State, Burma, the troops of the Burmese Military Regime, State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), have treated innocent Mon civilians inhumanely and cruelly. Regarding this case, HURFOM has called on the troops of the Burmese army to stop all use of psychological offensives against innocent civilians.

On 4<sup>th</sup> December, after a military clash between Burmese army troops and a Mon splinter group in an orchard plantation near Khaw-za sub-town, about 10 Kilometers south of Ye town, SPDC troops from the No. 31 Infantry Battalion (IB) led by Lt. Col. Myo Swe have committed the following human rights violations:

- Troops from IB No. 31 arrested about 100 villagers from Khaw-za sub-town and detained them in the military barracks of Khaw-za sub-town. In this arbitrary arrest, about 50 people are women and 15 are children. These people are innocent villagers and do not have any connection to the rebels.
- The owner of the farm where the fighting happened was arrested and brought to Ye Town. He has likely been detained and tortured due to the soldier's suspicions of his support to the rebels.
- Both men and women who were detained on 4<sup>th</sup> December have been tortured in the military barracks. Men were shocked with electricity and women were slapped by soldiers during interrogation regarding activities of rebel soldiers in the area. This was inhumane and cruel torture by the Burmese military troops in attempt to get information and a threat to those detained to not contact Mon rebels.

Besides massive arbitrary arrests and torture, the SPDC troops are also involved in various types of human rights violations against innocent Mon civilians.

Therefore, HURFOM calls the SPDC and International Community to pay attention to these massive arbitrary arrests and inhumane treatment against innocent civilians.

HURFOM calls

- On the SPDC's Southeast Command (in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State) to punish Lt. Col. Myo Swe and tactical commander Col. Than Toe (under the command of Military Operation Command No. 19) for their crimes against innocent civilians according to national law.
- On the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) and UN agencies to help the detained civilians which include women and children, and to ensure their safe release and offer assistance for their protection.
- On the international community to condemn the SPDC and the Burmese Army for their use of cruel tactics in the treatment of innocent civilians.

**Human Rights Foundation of Monland -Burma**

## Report

### Militia troops on the rise:

#### A new strategy to rip off the local inhabitants in Southern Burma

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##### The updated Situation

Recently the SPDC has been expanding and organizing the People's Militia Force (known as *Pyitthu-Sit in Burmese*) in many areas in the southern part of Burma. Particularly in Yebyu, Ye, Thanbyuzayat, Mudon and Kyaikmayaw Townships. In order to increase its long term hold on power, the Burmese military has ordered every village headman to recruit more villagers' for People's Militia Force. The new recruits are trained by the local military commanders based in the area. The military training schools train villagers specifically to fight against armed insurgencies and the dispersal of large crowds of protesters. In general this is to enable the military to use villages as militia forces if the country were to have another internal uprising or if an overseas country were to invade Burma.

The residents are being chosen to join the people's militia through a voting system. The stipulations of service in the People's Militia Force are varying. Some villagers have to go on three month rotating schedules and others who can afford to bribe the local Army's commander and the village head of militia have to go for only 3 to 5 weeks. The number of the inhabitants who were forced to work in the People's Militia' Force depends on the population, with the larger villages being likely to send more recruits to the People's Militia Force. It was reported that villagers who do not want to serve in the militia must pay a fee of as much as Kyat 20,000 to 30,000 a month.

##### The Act of Compulsory Military Service and People's Militia Force

Since the regime publicised the 1959 People's Militia Act it has become easy for the military to conscript people into forced military service. The People's Militia Act, 1959, was published in the Official Gazette. Under the provisions of the Act, Burmese nationals can be called up for full-time or part-time service in the armed forces. Under section 3(a), subparagraphs 1 and 2, all men from age 18 to 35 and all women from age 18 to 27 can be called for full-time service in the armed forces for a period of not less than six months and not more than 24 months; under subparagraphs 4 and 5, doctors, engineers or persons having any other skill can be called for military service for a period of 24 months between the ages of 27 and 35 in the case of women, and for a period of 18 months between the ages of 35 and 56 in the case of men.

Under section 3(b), all men from age 18 to 46 and all women from age 18 to 35 can be called for part-time service, i.e., for a total of not more than 30 days a year, which may be increased by seven days in certain cases. The People's Militia Act, as adopted in 1959, does not contain any provisions under which work or service is to be exacted for work of a non-military character.

Interestingly under section 1(2) of the People's Militia Act, "This Act shall come into force on a day to be notified by the Government". However it is not clear whether such notification has been made and the Act brought into force. (Source: ILO)

Currently when the Burmese Army recruits local villagers to the Militia, they never refer to the Peoples Militia Act. Normally villages are recruited by force without their respect for their situation. Some villagers are forced into the Militia without notice. Before recruitment meetings are not always arranged and villagers are often just forced to work in this service.

##### Recruitment and villagers' supports to militiamen

In most places during the training the recruits were told that in the future there would be for a fact, an internal insurgency and an invasion from outside. So all members of the militia needed to act as a defense force for the continued protection of Burma as a sovergin nation and not allow it to fall into the hands of its

common enemies. The militia trainers were mostly the military commanders from the local battalions in each area and accused all opposition groups and political armed groups as 'foreign vagues' who were out to destroy the country.

The local villagers are given basic military training and given weapons and uniforms once the training is ended. After the training they are expected to perform duties like patrolling the villages. According to an ex-member of the militia from An-Khae village of Thanbyuzayat Township, militia were sometimes taken by patrolling SPDC troops to act as guides when SPDC troops made offensives against the ethnic armed opposition groups.

**An ex-member of the militia added.**

"It seems that the Burmese troops are trying to get the Mon people to kill each other. The Burmese Commander ordered the people to open fire if the Mon or Karen rebels come closer to their villages. If anyone loses their gun, they are punished and must pay back its cost."

The members of the militia are instructed by the commanders of the Burmese Army to patrol their own areas to prevent any approach made by the soldiers. Villagers must pay for the salaries of those militiamen, which is a difficult responsibility for local civilians.

"The village administration ordered us to take care of them (the militia) with cash and food supplies. We have been paying for many years for the militia. But this season, we have to pay more than before because the local battalion has recruited more for the village Militia Force. My household had to provide Kyat 2,000 for their salary and food. Moreover an order issued in the last month stated that all the men in the village must serve as the People's Militia Force. So I will definitely have to serve for a couple of months even though I do not want to," said Nai + + + + +, a 35 years old man from Sone-na-tha village, Southern Ye Township, Mon State.

Because of this new order, some inhabitants also fled from their villages to keep from being recruited. Three months ago, after many members of the People's Militia Force resigned, the Burmese Army in Ye Township had to form a new structure for the militia. They forced all men in the village to serve as members of militia force on a rotation basis. The local military battalions registered all men between the age range of 18 to 45 years and ordered them to serve in the militia. At a result the villagers have less and less opportunity to do their own jobs for their survival.

Additionally, the Burmese Army has also restricted the movement of local villagers and farmers in order to stop them from supporting rebel armies. The Burmese Army believes that the local civilians are supporting the rebel armed force. Movement restriction in terms of livelihood has created great suffering and food-shortage problems in the rural areas of southern parts of Burma.

In the context of SPDC's militarization policy the Burmese Army is trying to give defense duties that they have to the civilians. They believe that the civilians must know how to fight against 'their' enemies, especially the rebel armed forces; and foreign invaders.

"After the training they provided them with weapons and some essential equipment. I noticed that the local battalion provides them with guns like G2's, G3's and Burmese made rifles," explained an anonymous ex-soldier from New Mon State Party who live in Taung-Pon village.

Even though many villagers are not willing to join the People's Militia' Force some villagers who want more opportunities or profits are willing to join. They know that being a member of village militia force means they do not have to contribute labour for various government's projects.

"Neither the local battalions nor village authorities support them with cash or anything so the villagers have to give to the militia. Some militiamen have family and each household has to give them two to four baskets of paddy each. These villages there are big with about 100 or 200 houses so the militia groups can get enough food supplies," the New Mon State Party's ex-soldier continued.

## People's Militia Force: Another Name for an Anti-Demonstration force

According to an anonymous local community leader from Mudon Township, this new forming of the "People's Militia Force" is very similar to the group called the "People Vigorous Association" which was created by the Mon State authority in the last couple of years ago.

"It is just to trick the people. This People's Militia Force seems to me to be very similar with People Vigorous Association which formed in the last two years ago in our village. At that time the local military commanders and Township authorities conscripted members members of the Township and village level militia force. Now they do again and simply change the name to the People's Militia Force. They claimed that they would use the People's Militia Force as *commandos* in anti-strike or anti-demonstration situations created by the pro-democratic opposition," explained a 60 year old man from Naing-hlone village, Mudon Township, Mon State.

Since two years ago, the Mon State government formed various militia forces after the military training and put every trainee into those organizations. The main groups that were formed by the SPDC are: *People Vigorous Association, Anti-Strike Group, People Defense Force and Peoples Militia Force*. In these groups members were from the USDA, town ward authorities, village leaders, local militiamen and firemen. The selected members were trained how to use the guns and alarmingly have the right to open fire on groups of demonstrators if necessary.

"It is very clear that they (the local authorities) are trying to create this People's Militia Force as their extra or emergency forces for them to fight against the unforeseen events." said a Mon local community leader from Naing-hlone village, Mudon Township.

## The Structure of 'People's Militia Force'

According to an order signed by the Township SPDC of Thanbyuzayat, each sub-Town and village track under the control of the Thanbyuzayat Township administration must form a rotating membership structure of People's Militia Force with the local government supported organizations. In this order under the authority of the Township Strategic Command, the People's Militia Force was divided into various responsibilities in certain areas such as local sanctuary unit; information collecting unit; public affairs unit and logistics unit. This formation is quite similar to the structure of the previous 'People vigorous Association'.

The village headmen has to manage the rotation component of the thirty members of the militia. On the other hand, the head of People's Militia has to recruit members for the new rotation militia system within his area. Moreover, those village headmen are sometimes the trainers of the basic militia course if needed. During the military training, the villagers are trained to learn how to use 24 types of arms and equipment. Accordingly to one source, the local Army and the members of permanent Militia also planned to provide management training to the trainees. Also the Burmese Army appointed leaders or commanders for each group, and give the instructions through those leaders or commanders in case of emergency.

## The distress of the local inhabitants

Conscription of the civilians to provide service in armed force is a category of 'forced labour' to raise the armed forces by the SPDC regime. This is one type of forced labor, by forcing civilians in peace time to serve in the army. Many villagers are unhappy with the local authorities for being used as the members of the People's Militia Force for the army. However nobody has complained if they do, they can be arrested and detained.

Initially the civilians who were forced to attend training had to abandon their work for at least two weeks to one-month. More villagers in the rural areas are farmers and when they had to attend the training school, they had to totally abandon their farms, fruit or rubber plantations. They can lose their crops and therefore their profits from these farms. Traditionally the Mon men mainly provide earnings for their families. Therefore while the men are in the military training school, it is difficult for the women who remain at home to find income. Many poor families faced quite tricky situations to have enough food and daily income while their husbands are attending the Militia training.

Evidence of the government's People's Militia recruitment and the suffering of the civilians in each township in Southern Burma are as below:

### **The recruitment of People's Militia Force by Local Military Battalions**

Since October of this year, LIB No. 282 forced the villagers from Kyauk-ka-din and Yapu village tract in Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division to join the People's militia forces by a rotating system for one to three months. According to the order from the Commander of Light Infantry Battalion No. 282, all men in the village under 45 years old must join the village militia force to help the Burmese Army's local military battalions and to fight against the rebel armed forces if those rebel troops come close to their areas.

“Every man under 45 years old needs to serve in the village's *Pyithu Sit* for at least 3 months. The village headmen U Pan Hlaing is the leader of the *Pyithu-sit* in Kyauk-ka-din village. The village headman is always the *Pyithu-sit* leader in every village, I think. They give us guns and we have to stay in our village and be sentries. When the rebel armed troops especially troops of *San Shae* (a name of rebel leader) Mon rebel and KNU/KNLA draw closer to our village, we have to fire at them. There are about 150 households in the village. It means each man from each household have to do once a year with no assistance from them (the local battalions). They don't pay us anything. Some villagers do not want to do it, but they must do it for at least three months.” Nai Aung Ngwe (not real name), 38 years old villager who used to serve as village *Pyithu-Sit* member in Kyauk-ka-din village, Yebyu Township, shared his experiences to HURFOM.

According to the reporter, LIB No. 282 registered men between 18 years and 45 years old in village and provided them with basic arms and military training since early October.

Similarly, in Yapu village, the first force of village People's Militia Force, about 30 members were organized in the beginning of September 2006 by LIB 282. Some villagers have money so they hire people as substitutes. To sign up people with money, firstly, those people have to inform the leader of the People's Militia Force and pay him Kyat 10,000 to 25,000 for one month. Then he will manage to find another man as substitute.

“My wife does not let me join *Pyithu-Sit* because she knows this job is very dangerous for me. So, even though my family is not rich I have to find money to give to the village headmen to avoid joining *Pyithu-Sit*. I noticed that many villagers do not want to be a *Pyithu-Sit* but unfortunately, most villagers have no cash to hire other men to serve for them. In Yapu village, thirty villagers have to join the *Phithu-Sit* and after the basic militia training, these thirty members were divided into three groups to guard the village's security. I'm from the first group and I paid the village headmen Kyat 25,000 to pass on my duty. Currently, the second group of *Pyithu-Sit* is starting in the LIB 282 battalion. After that they will change the duty with the first group”, said the Ko Win Naing (not real name), 29 years old villager from Yapu village, Yepyu Township.

Villagers could not earn income during their Militia training, moreover, they also had to pay trainers for the trainers expenditures during the whole period of training. In Yapu and Kyauk-ka-din villages, each household, despite income differences had to provide Kyat 5000 to LIB No. 282 for the cost of training. Farmers households which have paddy farms or plantations, had to provide two baskets of rice and some fresh vegetable as food supply during *Pyithu-Sit* training.

After training, the villagers are forced to be village militiamen on a rotation basis in their villages. They are conscripted to be in the militia for at least three months at a time. The militia leaders who are village headmen would manage the conscription of militiamen on a rotating basis. If one household failed to provide when their rotation is due, then that family must pay Kyat 50,000 as a fine to the LIB No. 282, according to the order of the Commander.

LIB No. 408 and 409 took the responsibility to organize the basic People's Militia Force's training to the local villagers in Ale-Sa-Khan and Koe-mine, Yepyu Township, Tenasserim Division. According to the local residents, the basic People's Militia Force training have been going since the beginning of September 2006 and the soldiers from LIB No. 408 and 409 from the villagers by demanding money during the Militia training.

“My turn will be in the next two months. Three month ago Captain Win Nyunt from LIB No. 409 and his troops called a meeting in the village's administration office. In the meeting he

announced that all villagers who are the age of 18 to 45 must join in village Militia force. The first group almost ended and my dad was in the first group. I think it is a waste of time for our villagers. I know that nobody wants to be part of the Burmese army. Protecting and fighting is not our job. This job is also very harmful for normal villagers who have not many skills to fight with guns. But nobody dares to criticize this policy yet. This year, many adults from our village fled to Thailand to avoid militia training,” claimed by a 25 year old man from Ale-Sa-Khan village who fled to the border.

## **Plight of Villagers Under Forced Recruitment for the Militia**

### **Ye Township:**

Similarly to Yebyu Township, there is a strong emphasis on defending the nation from foreign invasion and internal disruptions. The local Burmese Army and the Ye township Peace and Development Council are forcing the local civilians to join the basic military training for the village Defense Force in Ye township, Mon State, said a local resident who live in Kaw-Dut village, Ye township.

Local residents, especially men from villages which have big populations like Kaw-dut, Taung-pyin and Maw-ka-nin were registered by local authorities or battalions and forced to join the *Pyithu-Sit* as rotation system. The selections of the people vary with the population of these villages. A village like Kaw-dut which has 60 people has to join in village *Pyithu-Sit* by voting system, whilst Taung-Pyin village has to recruit 30 persons for three month rotations. In Taung-Pon village, a household with five family members had to send at least one family member to serve in rotation *Pyithu Sit* unit and trainees were trained in the nearest military camp for a month. Once the training is finished the *Pyithu Sit* are required to patrol the area around their village and keep resistance groups from entering the village. Villagers from villages near Kaw-hlaing, Singu as well as from Koe-miles, Kaloh and Kaloh-gyi villages have had to gather quotas of men established by the SPDC. It was reported that one person from each house in Kaw-hlaing village had to join the *Pyithu-sit*. In most villages from Southern Part of Ye Township, 25 to 30 villagers had to join in their village *Pyithu-sit* unit.

### **Accordingly to Nai Htein Win, 34 years old farmer from Taung-bon village,**

“In the beginning of September of this year, troops of LIB No. 583 based near our village told us that they would have militia training for each village near our village. They would choose trainees by voting system and those selected people have to go. Currently the selected villagers from my village are attending military training and after that they have to take care of village for three months. I don’t know when it will be my turn to serve.”

Because of the current rotation People’s Militia Force, many villagers’ money was extorted to support the militia. In the second week of October, 2006, cash was extorted from the local inhabitants by the Burmese Army of Light Infantry Battalion No. 586 in Azin village to pay for training and trainers.

“Money was collected by our village headman who is also the leader of *Pyithu-sit* and we have to pay Kyat 3,000 each. In Azin village, there are approximately 300 households and so they might receive a lot of money. We are not bold enough to complain. We might be punished if we are against the order of LIB No.586 and village administration group. The village headmen told us this cash was to support a SPDC-sponsored people’s militia force in the village, but most of us don’t believe the money will go there.” said Nai Maung Ngae (not real name), a former Mon education worker in Azin village.

Correspondingly two month ago, the commander of Infantry Battalion No. 61 gave an order to the village administration group of Yin-Yae village to collect money from the villagers to be used to support members of a people’s militia in the village. All the 150 houses or so in that village were required to provide money under the instruction of IB No. 61. HURFOM reporter said people’s militia force which was formed from the villagers under the instruction of the IB No. 61 consisted of 60 members in both Yin-yae and Yin-dein village, Ye Township. The main purposes of the people’s militia was to join with the Burmese Army’s troops on their patrols and sentry duties. Members of the militia were required to work in rotation in the IB No. 61 base, 30 persons at a time for a period of one month and after that the villagers have to join the village’s *Pyithu Sit* for at least three months.



“Members of the permanent militia had been forced to serve without pay for several years since the forming of the force. Now the local authorities want to pay them in return for their services, and villagers in the villages who did not have members of their families in the *Pyithu-sit* were also required to contribute money,” said Nai Maung Ngae.

According to the source from Yin-Dein village, every household was required to supply Kyat 1,500 of cash per month, and those cash was to be collected by the village administration troops and handed to the commander of IB No. 61, who organized the people’s militia course. Nevertheless, according to a reliable source from Yin-dein village, since this new *Pyithu-sit* policy started over the last three months, members of the *Pyithu-sit* were only offered low quality of foods during the *Pyithu-sit* training, no cash were given during the three months services in village’s *Pyithu-sit* unit. Only the members of permanent village’s *Pyithu-sit* (usually about five members in each villages) were given Kyat 2,000 each as stipend which was only a fraction compared to the total amount collected.

Because of the military training arranged by Infantry Battalion No. 61, many young men fled to other villages and some fled to Thailand to work as migrant workers. Most young men would not like to join training school and militia force and so that they escaped from their villages.

**As an instance,**

On October 27 2006 the local SPDC Battalion IB No. 31 gathered the lists for recruits in which ten per cent of the local population were chosen for the militia training in Khaw-za Sub-Town and Han-gan village, Ye Township.

Under the instruction of IB No. 31, the Khaw-za Sub-Town’s Militia forces and counter insurgency forces are given powers to extort and punish villagers without impunity who refuse to accept them. According to the order issued by the Sub-Town’s authority and IB No. 31, the inhabitants are forced to give for all expenses in the basic militia training, including food, the militia’s stipends, and other extra costs. If they cannot they face indiscriminate arrest, torture, and harassment, worse they will be seen as suspects and beaten. Hence, many families in Khaw-za and Han-gan village are driven to hardship and depression; many flee to the Thai-Burma border.

“The villages are like open prisons. Many villagers are afraid to work in the militia force and some of them have already fled from the village to other places,” said Banya Mon, a youth leader from Han-gan Village.

The militia groups’ main role under military command is to act as a kind of buffer for the Burmese Army and the SPDC. After the SPDC local Army has given orders to village headmen in southern Ye, Mon State to conduct a draw to recruit villagers for the Burmese government’s militia training course, according to local witnesses.

At the results of forcible recruitment of *Pyithu-sit* by the Infantry Battalion No. 31, a villager from Toe-Tat village tried to kill himself on October 25, 2006.

**As an instance,**

On October 25, 2006, after Nai Htaw Maung, 35 years old man from Toe-tae village in southern Ye Township received the order of the Military Commander to serve in village’s *Pyithu-sit* and patrol the village, he tried to kill himself.

When the villagers came to see him after he consumed poison, he said “I cannot work and I have to do guard duty almost everyday. I have no property to fall back on for my family I was so disappointed that’s why I wanted to die.”

It was reported that while the infamous Lt Col Myo Min, took charge of Infantry Battalion (IB) No.31 based in southern Ye Township, the villagers have been facing a terrible situation. The villagers are being severely tortured by the military. Recently Nai Tun Oo and Nai Yought, from Khaw-Za Sub-Township were cruelly tortured by the soldiers from IB No. 31 because they did not see Mon rebel groups entering the village to collect rice from the villagers during their sentry duty. According to a source from the victims’ relative, both victims have got serious problem after they were tortured.

In these areas fighting often occurs between the Burmese Army's troops and rebel armed groups. The Burmese Army usually uses local people to guard their villages on a rotational basis of 10 to 12 persons per night in some villages where insurgents enter, said local residents. To cut off food supply for insurgent groups, the IB No.31 ordered villagers not to take food when they go to the farms and not to sell what the insurgents would like to buy from the village. According to reporter, two Mon girls were arrested on the end of October for selling things to insurgents in Khaw-za Sub-Town.

At present forcible recruitment of members for the militia are ongoing in Khaw-za Sub-Town and the villages nearby. In order to avoid *Pyithu-sit*, villagers have to bribe Kyat 400,000 (US\$ 304) per household, according to reporter from Khaw-sa Sub-Town. The residents are being chosen to join the militia through a voting system. Each village has to send 35 villagers to join the militia but larger villages like Khaw-za Sub-town have to send 40 people, residents said.

“They (the Burmese troops) told us ‘people have to be responsible for doing their duty for the country’ and they named the splinter Mon Army Group as a rebel group. I don’t want to kill our own people so I fled to Thailand,” said a villager who did not want to be named.

The IB No.31 has made three rounds of selections of villagers to join the people’s militia to fight insurgent groups but most people are running away from the village when they are assigned to join the *Pyithu-sit*.

Troop deployment started on July 1 and they put their bases along the motor road between Thanbyuzayat and Ye Town in Mon State. In each village along the motor road, the Burmese Army deployed 50 to 200 troops. While the soldiers are in Ye and Thanbyuzayat Township, they also looted the livestock raised by the villagers and some commanders also tried to rape Mon women in the villages.

**As an instance,**

On July 4 night, one low-rank commander of Burmese Army, Sergeant Hla Win, from LIB No. 355 attempted to rape a Mon woman, Mi San Aye (34 years old) in Waekar village in Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State.

Under the militarization policy of the regime, the Burmese Army plans to put more civilians into the army.

### **Mudon Township:**

Similar to other townships in southern part of Burma, the Township authorities and Burmese Army based in Mudon Town are forcing the local civilians to participate in *Pyithu-sit*. In this area, the villagers who were chosen to be members of *Pyithu-sit*, have to guard the gas pipeline rather than the village security.

“This is a new strategy by Burmese authorities to rip off the Mon people” said unnamed local Mon monk from Kamawet Sub-Town in Mudon Township.

According to a local source a few weeks ago, the Burmese militia leader of Hnee-padaw village, Mudon Township has ordered villagers to guard the Yadana gas pipeline in their areas and at the same time asked the people to give him money. In addition village militia leader and village headman, U San Maung has directed ten villagers of Hnee-padaw village to guard the gas pipeline each night. If people do not go for guard duty they are to be fined Kyat 6,000. For people who agree to guard the pipeline, he has demanded Kyat 3000, said a villager.

“If we do not go, we have to give twice the amount of money we would have to pay if we do go for guard duty. If we go for guard duty because we do not have the money even then we have to give them half the money,” said a villager.

Similar to Hnee-pa-daw village ten villages around Mudon Township were assigned by local authorities to guard the pipeline every night. The number of people sought for guard duty differs from village to village. Some villages asked for three people to guard the pipeline, some five and some ten people each night. Although the government keeps saying, that human rights abuse in the country is on the decline, the people in rural areas claim nothing has changed as far as human rights abuses go in their communities.

In Kloh-tort village and Kama-wet Sub-Town, Burmese military has formed a people’s militia with the member of Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), former members of *Pyithu-sit* and villagers who

## Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1995, 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 e-mail as below:

HURFOM, P. O. Box 2237, General Post Office  
Bangkok 10501, THAILAND  
E-mail: [hurfomcontact@yahoo.com](mailto:hurfomcontact@yahoo.com)  
Website: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director  
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

are under 45 years old in the whole area to act as a defense against either internal insurgents or external invasions in cooperation with the local battalions, as of September, 2006.

"You know, it causes a big problem for me to join this rotation *Pyithu-sit*. I have a big family and most of my family members are children and elder persons who are totally depend on my income. I'm not a rich man to hire other person to take on my duty. I had heard that they will call *Pyithu-sit* from each village. We have no choice and just only pray," Nai Min Lwin, 42 years old paddy farmer from Kaloh-tort village.

In this area, the Mudon township authorities issued the order of recruitment of *Pyithu-sit* since early September and the SPDC authorities have declared that all men under 45 years of age in villages near Kaloh-tort village and Kamawet Sub-Town must attend military training and must serve at least three months as members of

### News from Page No.2

of orchards and rubber plantations which belonging to the local villagers in Ye township.

According to the sources from the local villagers from Abaw village, Ye Township, there are no explanations for seizing the lands. Most of lands are good lands and approximately thirty five acres of it were covered with orchards plantations and ten acres are rubber plantations.

U Aung Soe (not real name), a land lost victim who currently live in Ye Town said that he is still paying the taxes for scraping and getting rubber sap even though the military battalions having confiscated his land.

"My land was confiscated since the beginning of this year. They seized with no compensation. But they let me work in my plantations by pay land taxes. I already paid Kyat 2.8 millions for rubber processing taxes to the local military for this year. Some owners are trying to pay about the same as me" Nai Aung Soe added. The battalions have

allowed the owners to scrape rubber sap even after confiscation. If the villagers who lost their plantations or lands stop paying the "scrape taxes" to the Burmese battalions, they cannot process rubber in their own lands.

"However, they (local military authorities) take from the orchard owners fruits like Areca nut, Durian, Leinmo and lime as rental fee for cultivating a piece of land," the source said.

Recently, the villager in Kaloh-Gyi village was ordered to ask the permit to work in their own farms. According to the local source, the permitting fee is about Kyat 300 per day for a person. "If you go to your plantation again, you must buy the ticket once again." a villager added.

On the last August, 2006, SPDC Light Infantry Battalion No. 591 led by Commander Ba Lay and LIB No.583 confiscated many good lands from the civilians who live near Ye town, Mon State in order to build new Army barracks and a play ground according to HURFOM reporter.

Pyithu-sit in their areas. The residents are told that they have no choice but to go, although in some places villagers can pay 300,000 Kyat to avoid having to go to the Pyithu-sit.

According to the villager who has the member of Pyithu-sit in his family,

“The villagers are ordered to go back to their villages and stay at home, but they

have to always send information to the village SPDC and local battalions. The plan is that the trained villagers can be recalled when they are needed. Many villagers are frightened of this because they are worried about being forced to join the SPDC Army”.



Villagers are forced to work in front of SPDC's Infantry Battalion in Mon State

In Kyaik-ma-yaw Township, the authority used to form people’s militias in large villages such as Tarana, Kaw-don, Kaw-pa-naw, Khayar and Nei-done villages. At the present time however, the military has formed a new rotation Pyithu-sit which includes the whole part of the towns and at least 10 to 15 other village tracks in the same region.

### Conclusion

The militarization policy is directly against democratization in Burma. Although the regime is saying they are moving toward democratization, in reality, they try to control all civilians under their command. Most civilians in Burma lose individual rights and they could not make their own judgments. They are under the order of the Burmese Army and regime authorities.

On the other hand, the regime and Burmese Army now is trying to create more ‘conflict’ against the democratic opposition groups rather than ‘negotiation’. They prepare to be ready for more attacks if there is a demonstration or political activity in the country. They have not cared much for the international condemnation of the massacre in Upper Burma which is well-known ‘Depayin Massacre’ which was happened on May 30, 2002. After this bloody crack down against the pro-democracy force, the regime has not cared to commit another violent offence.

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