

The Mon Forum

Issue No. 12/2006

December 31, 2006

The Publication of The Human Rights Foundation of Monland (BURMA)

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Some Acronyms in This Issue

IDP-	Internally Displaced Persons
SPDC-	State Peace and Development Council
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's Militia Force

News

Burmese battalion continues to torture southern Mon people

Monday 8 January 2007

Torture of villagers, use of forced labor, and applications of illegal taxes by Burmese battalions are growing in Southern Ye, Mon State.

The international community and the UN (United Nations) condemned the Burmese regime's use of forced labor and human rights abuses, and placed the Burmese issue onto the UN agenda in the Security Council to put pressure on the military government stop using such tactics.

However, the Burmese army still continues to employ forced labor for road construction, the building of army barracks, arbitrary detention, and torture of the people by accusing them of supporting the Mon rebels. Recently, torture and forced labor have been carried out in various ways in Southern Ye.

Villagers were forced to guard their own villages to provide security for the army and also to inform the army of who came to the village. Villagers were also forced to give any information that they possessed concerning news of rebel groups. Every day ten people were forced to perform guard duty. Two people have to guard each entrance of the village,. People were forced to bring 500 kyat to feed the Burmese army when they go on guarding duties.



Using Forced Labor in Southern Ye Township, Mon State

SPDC's Militarization Policy and Impact on Mon People

Since 2000, the ruling regime (SPDC) has deployed more and more troops in Mon State, including 10 Light Infantry Battalions and 10 Artillery Regiments.

Along with militarization, there is a great impact to the local Mon people in the area. Soon after the deployment of these military battalions, the villagers nearby were forced to contribute unpaid labour in various constructions of barracks and road construction.

Use of forced labour for military deployment has continued since 2001. In 2006, there were massive uses of forced labour in southern part of Ye Township.

During military deployment, the SPDC confiscated lands from the local Mon farmers. According to armed base regulation, although it needs to take 50 acres of lands, the Burmese Army confiscated between 200-400 acres of lands from the civilians. Land confiscation continued in 2006 for a military fund in Mudon and Thanbyuzayat Township.

More seriously, now the military battalions forced young men from 20 to 40 years old to join in their militia force to protect against foreign invasion. They were forced to attend military training school and then recruited into militia forces to provide security in their own area.

The Mon people have seriously suffered from abuses related to militarization and they have never received protection from any authorities or the international community.

“We guard them and we have to feed them. If the rebel comes, we don't see, then they beat us. But they (army) sleep in the barrack. They don't guard with us. We have to guard the whole night,” said a villager, Zar Yar Mon, who escaped to the Thai-Burma border.

Plantation owners, growing areca nut and farmers were forced to give 1,500 betel nuts to army officers to allow access to the plantation. If people don't give the betel nuts, they were not allowed into the garden. The cost of a betel nut is about 12 kyat.

The army arrested two followers of astrology. The first was an astrologer who predicted the future of the rebels. The army also arrested a second man, a plantation owner, because the prediction took place in his garden. A Mon Human Rights field worker reports that four people, the astrologer, the garden owner and two other follower of astrology have been detained for two months, under suspicion of supporting rebels. This is despite having already paid a bribe of 6 million Kyat to the military officers.

On January 6, the Burmese Army arrested about 50 plantation owners and cultivators from Kwan-tamoi-tae-tat village and Pauk-pin-kwin village because they had food supplies with them during checking.

About five villagers among them were severely tortured after being flung into the water and then beaten up. The Burmese Army does not allow people to bring food to the gardens.

In the first week of December, 2006, Burmese soldiers arrested about 100 villagers after a firefight with a Mon rebel group and punished them with electric shocks. Part of the punishment was also to block further access to plantations. Twenty five people, suspected supporters of the rebels who were close to the garden fire fight, were punished with fines of 3,000,000 kyat per person.

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Burmese Army confiscates land, farmers pay to work it

December 25, 2006

The Burmese Army demands money from farmers who want to work on confiscated land once belonging to them.

According to a local farmer from Sonnathar (Jomsai) of Ye Township, the Burmese Army's Light Infantry Battalion No. 586 demands money from farmers who want to harvest rubber plants that once belonged to them. Farmers are normally ordered to provide up to 25% of their harvest to the BA. For 2007, they are required to pay 650 Kyats per plant and the price will go up in the coming year.

The LIB No. 586 confiscated over 300 acres of lands belonging to Thu-myaing and Sonnathar villagers of Ye to build military battalions and for the expansion of troop deployments in 2002. According to the Burmese Army they have the right to confiscate land

for national security purposes under the national security act and the farmers as a result are not compensated. "This land is for troop deployment now," said one military commander after he confiscated hundreds of acres in 2001 according to said purpose.

However, the reasons for the confiscation not only include the building of battalions, but also for settlement expansion of the Burman population, to push back rebels to the border, and to keep the NMSP to at bay if they wish to resume fighting again.

According to Human Rights Foundation of Monland based in Sangkhalaburi, Thailand Burma border, land confiscation in Mon State began in 1997 under the direction of township authorities and military battalions. Since the beginning of 1998, the Burmese army has confiscated up to 8,000 acres of prime agriculture land, which also includes orchards, rubber plantations, salt production fields, and pasture lands. The army, police, and township authorities also confiscate land from farmers who cannot afford to pay heavy taxes imposed by the Burmese government.

Land confiscation has a devastating impact on the lives of Mon farmers, who suffer from economic deprivation and human rights abuses with the presence of soldiers. Farmers must apply for permission to work on their own land in the form of recommendation letters acquired through bribery from the village headman. Once land is confiscated the BA removes all fruits and vegetables for themselves and their families. At the present time, rubber latex is being tapped en masse by the army which is fetching a good price on the market. Now thousands of farmers and their hired labourers are without land and will face devastating consequences, mainly their ability to survive through the dry season, when they have little or no other income.

Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 586 led by Colonel Ngwe Soe were infamous in the southern Ye area for their brutality. In 2004, Soe executed over ten villagers suspected of being connected to Mon rebel-supporters, with many being tortured or either restricted in their daily movements or forcibly displaced during Burmese military operations against Mon guerrillas led by the Hongsawatoï Restoration Party.

Sron a highland farmer from Mudon Township, Mon State said,

"Some farmers claimed that paddy production had come down because of the unstable and changing weather."

Two Crops Causes Debt Cycle For Farmers

The military government has ordered growing of two crops in Mon State. Many farmers have become poor because the two crop order has made it more difficult for them to grow crops in deep water. This flooding is a consequence of the canals that form part of the Win-pha-non dam construction project, which began in 2000.

The canal system has destroyed the farm crops and even the rainy season crops have not been successful. The canal banks are trapping water, causing paddies to remain flooded.

"We got five baskets of paddy from one acre this year. The dam destroyed our lives," said Tun Sein, a farmer Kalawthut village, Mudon Township.

The product of paddy has been reduced every year along Win Pa Non Dam near Kalawthut village. People have to grow anything from two to three paddies after initial attempts are destroyed by flooding. Farmers will often abandon their attempts after three failures.

The people are forced to grow summer crops every year. The military government officials, from the Ministry of Agriculture call people to village meetings, in order to enforce this ruling.

At one particular meeting a farmer proposed that the dam project is a failure. This assertion was met with anger by the government officials, Tun Sein added.

Due to failed crops, people have to borrow other people's paddy and become indebted so that they may keep growing on their farm. People don't want to grow, but they are worried that the lands will be taken by the military government.



Paddy plants were destroyed by canal system

The summer presents different problems for the farmers. The dam project does not provide enough water for the three month season necessary to grow a crop of rice. The government has attempted to avoid

■ **Continued on page No.5**

Report

Growing Use of Forced Labor and Illegal Taxation In Ye Township

I. Background

Burma is under international obligations to eliminate human rights abuse in different parts of the country, including the constant conscription by the successive military governments of citizens into forced labour mechanisms. The people are allowed to bring government officers and army commanders who have committed these crimes to court, in accordance with the Forced Labour Convention (which the military government had agreed to with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1999, to eliminate all types of using forced labour). In previous years, some NLD (National League for Democracy – a main opposition party in Burma) members attempted to bring to court local authorities who had used forced labor in a local town, in accordance with the laws and orders agreed to by the regime – State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and ILO.

The military government allowed ILO to set up office in Rangoon and promised to assist the ILO in order to eradicate forced labor in Burma. NLD labour activist, Ma Su Su Nawe, was the first person to bring military officers to the court. Although she was successful in this legal action, she was later arrested in retribution, for providing mis-information to the ILO and the SPDC planned to reject her case in the local court. There was some argument between ILO and SPDC on this issue in mid-2006 and the ILO appealed to secure her release, which was successful.

In collaborations between SPDC and the ILO Liaison Office in Rangoon (Yangon), agreements to implement ‘elimination of forced labour’ in all areas of Burma and the bringing of forced labour cases to the courts were produced. Further it was agreed that the SPDC needed to punish perpetrators who commit forced labour crimes. It was decided that the ILO representatives would be allowed to travel to ethnic areas to investigate instances of forced labor in those areas.

Most forced labor happened in ethnic areas close the border where the SPDC and troops of the Burmese Army are actively implementing a so called ‘border areas development program’ and a ‘military campaign against ethnic rebels’. ILO has been monitoring these areas regarding the use of forced labour. But in 2005, the military government restricted ILO members from going to ethnic areas near the border and the military government failed to cooperate with ILO in regard to earlier promises. Some pro-military government organizations protested in an attempt to oust ILO from the country, threatening ILO liaison officers not to interfere with the internal affairs of Burma.

In Mon State, the use of forced labour has been reduced in comparison with the situation before 1998, during which time the SPDC authorities and commanders of Burmese Army used ‘hundreds of thousands’ of ethnic Mon, Karen and Tavoyan inhabitants in construction of the 110 miles long Ye-Tavoy railway construction. Though reduced in frequency, the use of forced labour has been continuous.

In 2005 and 2006, with a primary purpose of maintaining full control of the entire area of Ye Township, the troops of the Burmese Army in the areas under Military Operational Command (MOC) No. 19 were involved in the implementation of ‘border area development program’ which included military offensives against a Mon splinter group. As a result, the civilians in the township have been forced to labour by the regime and have had to pay various types of taxes for both development programs and porter fees.

II. SPDC Taxation Strategy and Forced Labor

Ye township is located in southern Mon State, which is 100 miles from the capital of Moulmein (Mawlamain in SPDC’s term). During the period of the cease-fire between NMSP (New Mon State Party) and SPDC for 11 years, human rights abuses in some townships have decreased, whilst in others the level of abuses remained the same.

Ye township is an area that is semi-controlled by the SPDC in areas around the town. Eastern Ye is under the control of NMSP and its army MNLA (Mon National Liberation Army). (*See Map*). In Southern Ye, Mon

rebels have been active in the area. The SPDC recognizes this as a 'black' area. The SPDC seeks to increase its influence in the area in order to turn it from 'black' to 'white' (ie, an area clear of rebel activity). Following the 1995 ceasefire talks, NMSP had to withdraw all of its troops from southern part of Ye Township according to the ceasefire agreement. Allowing opportunity for SPDC to attempt to increase its influence in southern Ye. SPDC classified Southern Ye as a "black area" because a Mon splinter group has operated in the area. In 2005/06, the group led by San Sha (literally, Long Hair) had launched a military offensive against the Burmese Army.

Fighting between the Burmese Army and the Mon splinter group occurs often in this region. The fighting has caused civilians to suffer human rights abuses such as conscription as unpaid porters, forced labor, land confiscations and illegal taxes.

The majority of people are Mon, with some being of the Karen and Tavoy ethnic groups. Most people have one of two traditional occupations. The farmers of the inland regions grow paddy farms and orchard plantations. They also grow rubber plants and fruits. While those living near the coast of the Andaman Sea, are fishermen.

The Burmese army demand taxes from people when they go to tend their gardens. They are also taxed to pay for road construction, the building of army barracks, the training of militias and the guarding of villages (security). The effect of taxation is that many people have had to flee to the Thai-Burma border because they are too poor to pay the tax and do not want to do force labour. Thousands of Mon people from southern Ye became internally displaced persons (IDPs) during the 11 years of cease-fire. Between 1995-2006, there have been more than 10,000 IDPs displaced from Southern Ye.

The army is trying to turn the southern Ye township from a black area to a brown area, then eventually to a white area according to army reports. These reports are sent monthly to Southeast Command based in the capital in Moulmein. According to the strategy of the Burmese army, in order to modify the area from black to white, the army will destroy the networks between Mon armed groups and the people in an isolation policy called the "Four Cuts Campaign". This is a technique that had been used during 1980's by Burma's military socialist government led by Gen. Ne Win.

The four cuts policy attempted to undermine the Mon splinter group network in order to increase the military influence the area. The policy targeted the general population who were arrested, tortured, detained and used as slave labor for the building of army barracks. The forced labor began in earnest in 2003 when the Burmese army launched an offensive operation.

III. Problems with Current Growing Forced Labor and Taxes

The Burmese army has attempted to disrupt the activities of the rebels in order to secure rural areas. To achieve this plan they have targeted people suspected of supporting rebel groups, through the use of forced labor and the

■ News from page No.3

this problem by ordering the farmers to grow soy bean instead. However, the farmers know that rice paddy soil is inappropriate for this type of crop, and choose to eat the beans instead.

Paddy Prices Soar

The paddy price is going up in Burma this harvesting season compared to last year due to reduced production.

"Each year the price of paddy comes down when farmers harvest paddy. But it is strange that this year the price of paddy has gone up compared to last year," a farmer trading in paddy in Pegu town, Pegu Division, said.

The price of best quality paddy (Koutkyi) is more than Kyat 500,000 for 100 baskets (Burmese measurement) in Southern Burma. The price of this variety of paddy was around Kyat 350,000 for 100 baskets last year.

Normally the price of paddy comes down during the harvesting season even in the areas where the highest prices region as in the Southern Burma. Then, the price of paddy goes up again in the rainy season.

"The price of paddy has gone up because paddy cultivation was cut to half after paddy was destroyed by floods," Nai Way a farmer from Mon State said.

Some lowland farmers got no yield after floods destroyed their paddy fields. Even highland farmers claimed their yield had come down.

"Last year we got about 450 baskets from 10 acres of farmland. But this year, we have got only 200 baskets from the same land," Nai Mon Sron a highland farmer from Mudon Township, Mon State said.

Some farmers claimed that paddy production had come down because of the unstable and changing weather.

levying of illegal taxes from people, or relocating villagers altogether.

The Burmese army battalion in southern Ye township cannot provide sufficient salaries to soldiers and commanders as they lack adequate financial support from the military government. Commanders have demanded illegal taxes from villagers to support the families of army personnel. This has been justified as a labour contribution to the development projects/military deployment. Some taxes are used for the survival of SPDC soldiers and their families. Other taxes go directly to army commanders who are key decision makers. The main purpose of taking illegal taxes and using forced labor is the effect of forcing people from villages. The removal of villagers sympathetic to rebel groups makes it easier for the military to control such areas through the cutting of rebel support networks.

Families who could not pay taxes to the army battalions are forced to provide unpaid labour contributions in the southern part of Ye Township. The poor families do not have rest time nor working time in their own work-places, as forced labor consumes three weeks per month. They did not get any kind of payment for the work and they have to supply their own food. Some forced laborers are used in the government development projects – road construction and farming. Those who could not pay taxes nor contribute labour, have to flee from their homes and migrate into NMSP's area along Thailand-Burma border. Many of them have fled to Thailand in search of work.

Taxation:

A. Travel Document Tax

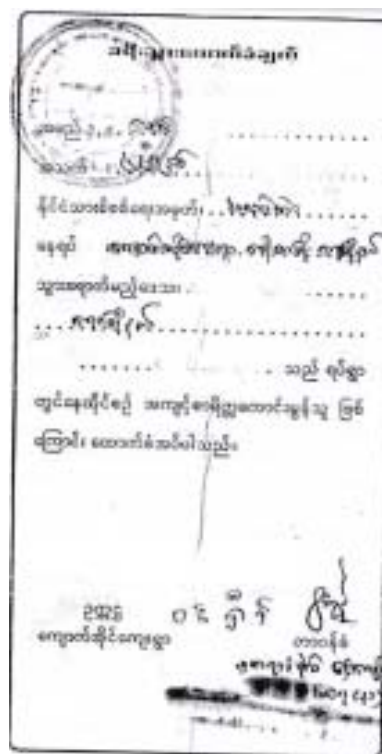
The travel document tax was begun when the army planned to launch a massive military offensive in the southern Ye, in late 2003, through the end of 2004. The travel document was intended to restrict Mon splinter group operation. According to orders from the Burmese army, every time people go to their paddy farms, orchard plantations or into forests to find forest products and fire-wood, they are required to bring travel documents. The army taxes 500 kyat for each document and it is valid for either one month, two weeks or one week, depending on the security situation of each area. Following expiration of the cards, people have to renew the document and are to pay a further 500 kyat.

Before people go to the orchards, they have to register the day, date, and time (when they will be back), writing on a list in front of the village headman. In some villages, people have to register at the army camps. When people come back from the gardens, they have to register again to inform authorities that they have come back from the gardens. The Burmese Army has ordered that individuals who do not bring documents when they are traveling, will be punished with fines. Alternatively, people who have forgotten to bring document papers and have also been punished by torture, detained or put into situations of permanent forced labour in army camps. These people have been ordered to cut fire-wood, perform cooking duties and help build barracks etc.

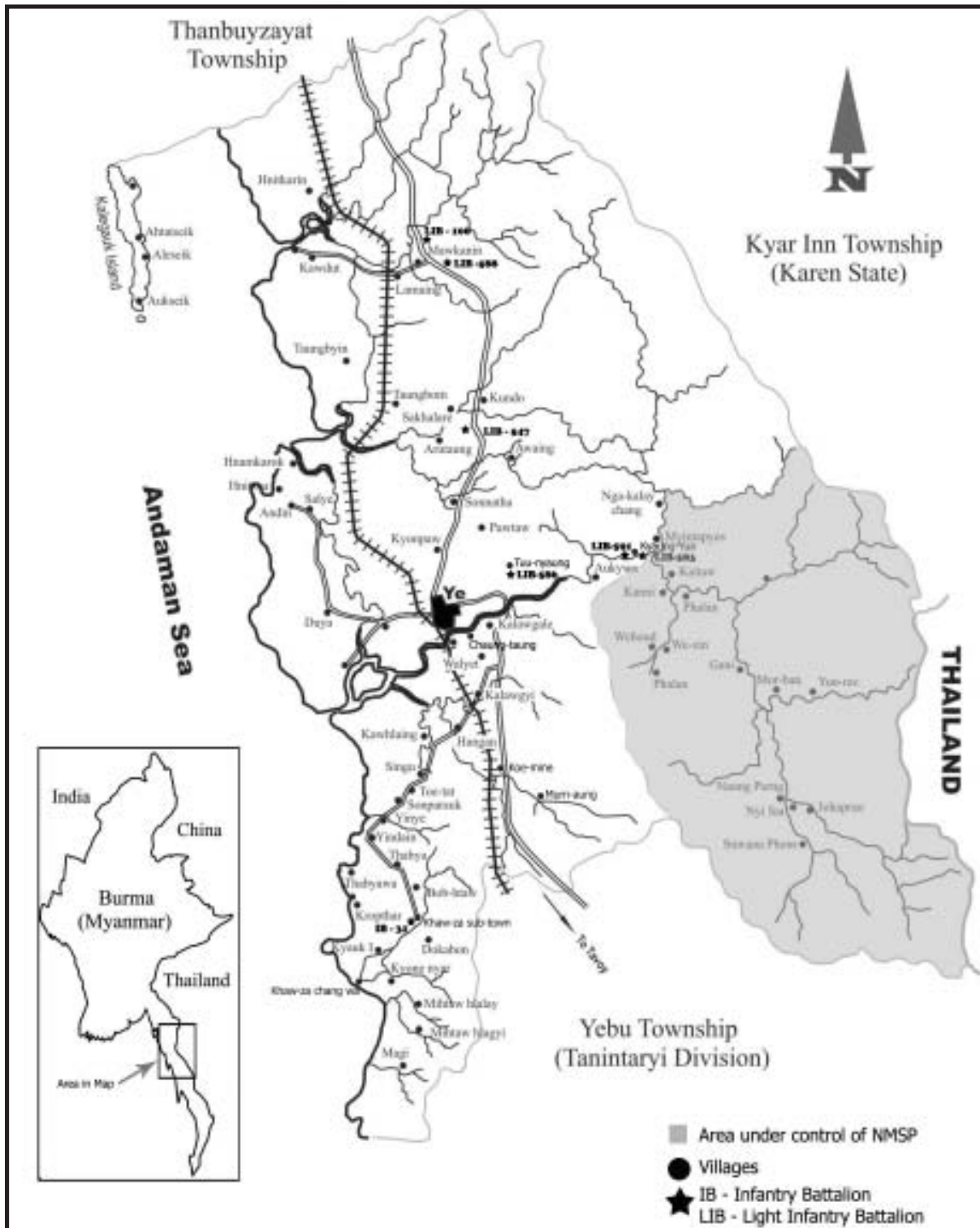
Mi Kon Thit, Mi Thin Aye, Nai Bai, and Nai Kyaw Win, four villagers who were living in Doe-baung village, close to Kaw zar Sub-Town, were exposed to punishments after neglecting to bring travel documents when they went to their place of work in an orchard, on December 4, 2006. A firefight erupted between Burmese Army and Mon Army forces near their orchard. After the fighting, Burmese Army searched for the Mon army elements in the area. The army arrested 100 people, including men and women at the gardens in the vicinity. The Burmese Army later detained about 25 villagers. The army accused them of providing money and food to the rebels.

Among the villagers arrested, were four people coming back from the gardens at 4:00 p.m., who were not carrying the required travel documents. Their punishment was to pay 300,000 Kyat per person. Moreover, the 4 individuals - Mi Kon Thit, Mi Thin Aye, Nai Bai, and Nai Kyaw Win - were detained for some days and were beaten and tortured with electric shocks by the IB No.31.

Sometimes, these documents allow very limited time for traveling to the orchards. If the villagers are come back late, the army accuses them of forming networks with the Mon army groups and of hiding the rebels in their orchards. Many of them do not want to stay over night or late evening in their gardens because they



Travel Document Paper



Map of Southern Ye Township and Eastern Ye, Mon State

know they can be punished. The villagers can not bring food, money or extra clothes, when they go to gardens. Before they go to the gardens, the army will check what they have in their bags and containers.

Moreover, the Burmese army often comes to perform checks when farmers are working in the gardens to attempt to secure information relating to the whereabouts of rebels or rebel bases. If they see extra food at gardens, they beat and take farmers to the front line, accusing them of giving food to the rebels. Villager Nai Ha Lai, has related the story of detention and arrest by the army in the following way:

“The army does not allow us to bring food sometimes. But today they went to areas and checked our food supplies. They found food and they beat us.”

When there is fighting, people are not allowed to go to the garden, even in the time when they can harvest their orchard fruits. The Burmese army collected these fruits without asking any permission from garden

owners or farmers. Sometimes, all fruits were ripe up during the time that the farmers were not allowed into the gardens. The farmers cannot go to gardens because of movement restrictions, the villagers have no food and they can not earn money from their gardens. During the time the farmers were in forced labor, the farmers totally lost any opportunity to work at their farms. According to a farmer, Nai Pai:

“I can’t provide food for my family because I have to do forced labor and pay taxes. Sometimes, I don’t have enough rice, I make rice soup for my three children. Because of a lot of forced labor and taxes, I have to run away from home.”

B. Orchard Tax

Fruit or orchard taxes are just normal taxes for people in Southern Ye. Every season when fruits are produced in the gardens, civilians are forced to give a certain amount fruits to the Burmese Army’s battalion as a tax. If they refuse, the farmers are not allowed to re-enter the orchards.

In December 2006, The local battalion of Burmese Army in southern part of Ye Township also demanded taxes of 1,500 betel nuts for each garden owner. This occurred during the fruit harvest in Toe-tat-ywa-thit village, which is close to Kaw Zar Sub-town. The betel nuts collected as ‘tax’ were kept at battalion camp and were dried, said a villager. This type of tax collection is for the purpose of raising a battalion fund in the area. The military collected and stored betel-nuts in the battalion camps and sold them at markets. The Burmese army battalions in Ye Township took fruit as a tax and then sold them in Ye town. Of the money received, some is used for general camp expenses and some is simply for personal expenditures. Most money garnered through illegal taxation is not reported or disclosed, he added.

The fruits tax depends on the season and which fruits are produced by the orchards. Sometimes, during the periods when the Burmese army does not allow the farmers into the orchards, the commanders let their soldiers collect betel nuts and other types of fruit such as limes and oranges, which they can sell in markets. The farmers work at orchard gardens and earn the majority of their income in this manner. Consequently, when the Burmese army’s soldiers take all or part of their fruit yield, they cannot earn enough money. This poses serious difficulties regarding the support of their families. The farmers who stay in the area close to Khaw-za Sub-Town have a mere one week to two weeks per month to work their farms or gardens, due to continuous and constant use of forced labour.

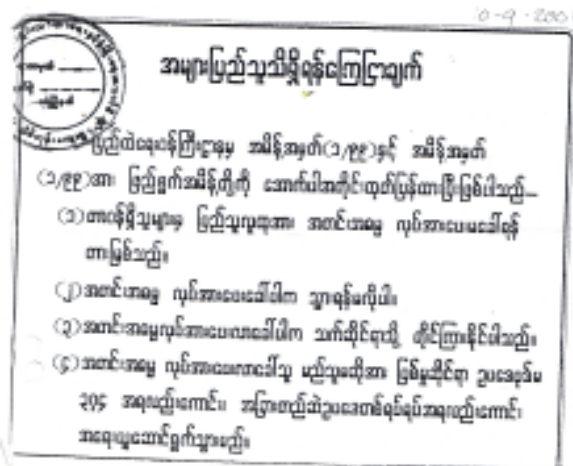
Forced Labour:

A. Forced Recruitment For Militia Training

Taxes, if they are not able to be paid in money, are extracted in the form of people being made to act as militias for guarding villages and to follow the army on the frontline.

“If you don’t want to join the training, you have to pay 25, 000 Kyat per week”, according to a Khaw-zar resident, Nai Tun who escaped to Thailand-Burma border. Every man in Khaw-zar Sub-town was forced to join the training. 35 residents from that Sub-town were trained for one month in the nearest military base of IB No. 31, which is near the Sub-town.

The militia training reinforces the military regime with additional troops, helping to undermine pro-democracy groups and to find ethnic armed groups in the area. Additionally, the Burmese Army will use these militia forces to find the underground democratic networks that link anti-government forces. They would also be employed in the event of anti-government demonstrations or uprisings in the country. The trainees were taught how to fight against armed insurgencies in their own area under the command of a nearest military battalion, how to break up an uprising, and how to organize and fight foreign invasion. Both the town residents and villagers in southern Ye did not want to join the training and many of them escaped from the villages.



Government declaration against forced labour

After the training, the Burmese army formed a 'militia force' and used those militia troops to fight the rebel groups. The report of the battalion, which is sent to Southeast Command on a monthly basis, mentioned how the SPDC armed force in southern Ye Township organizes the public into militia groups through training in their area.

"They gave us uniforms and guns in the training. I am afraid to be a soldier. I don't want to fight between Mons and Mons," claimed a villager who fled to Thai-Burma border from Khaw-za Chaungwa fishing village.

In every village in Mon State, the military forced civilians to attend the militia training for at least one month. There were exceptions in some villages and in some towns, which are under the control of the regime, where civilians were forced to join USDA (United Solidarity and Development Association), Myanmar Red Cross Society, Fire Brigade, Women and Children Welfare Association, organizations which the regime employs as supporting groups.

"They (the Burmese troops) told us 'people have to take responsibility for doing their duty to protect the country,'" said a villager from Khaw-za Sub-town. In some villages, the LIB No.31 have made three rounds of selections of villagers to join the people's militia training and formed them into groups to fight insurgents in the area.

"The troops persuade villagers to join the people's militia force by saying that it is a chance to avoid forced labor, but they don't give us a gun for security. We are just allowed to use a knife for protecting ourselves against the rebels," said a villager.

Many people did not want to join militia training and they couldn't afford to pay taxes, and were subsequently forced to flee from villages. Some people escaped to Thai-Burma border camp of Mon Halockani, and some moved to Tavoy district under control of NMSP forces. Each year, fifty new IDPs were estimated to have arrived in Tavoy district (*MRDC Fact Statistics*).

B. Forced Guarding of Villages

Every day, one person from each house has to guard their own village, providing security to protect the army from the approach of the rebel soldiers. Depending on the number of households in a village and how many entrances there are to the village, 10-20 villagers are forced to perform guard duty. For example, Han-gan village has 600 households. It has about six entrances outside of the village. Guarding each entrance to the village requires two people and the village headman has to arrange for the rotation of villagers. The guards have to inform the Burmese army commanders near their villages regarding who comes to the villages, along with any unusual activity. Especially, this relates to rebels coming into or approaching the villages, in which case the guards have to inform the army immediately.

Two villagers from Kwan-ta-moit village, near Khaw-za Sub-town, were seriously beaten by LIB No.31 on October 2, 2006 for failing to report the presence of Mon rebels inside their village. The military accused two villagers who were forced to provide security for the village, of lying about whether they saw the rebels come into village.

"When they asked us about whether the rebels came to the village, we told them we didn't see them (rebels). But they accused us of not telling the truth, then they beat us," said Nai Yxxx, a victim from that village.

According to Mi Txxx, two Mon rebels visited her house that day. However, the rebels entered through a hole in the fence and no one had observed their entrance. She worried that the military would make trouble for her family because the rebels came to her house, so she informed the military commanders quickly. However, when the military went to question her further, they could not find her. Instead they found the two villagers who were guarding the gates.

"They beat me with a bamboo stick. After one stick broke, they took another. I didn't know what I had done wrong. I didn't dare look at their faces when they beat me. When I looked, they slapped and kicked me with their military boots," he added.

Nai Yxxx's back bone was broken, he also suffered minor injuries to his ribs and hands. He and the other villagers were brought to the village clinic. Due to this incident he was unable to continue working. He was obliged to hire people to work for a few months in his farm instead because he had to receive long-term treatment.

In some villages, the villagers have to bring money or food along with them to feed the soldiers when they were allocated as village guards. Sometimes, the soldiers took money from the guards to buy liquor and, after were drunk they beat the guards, complaining that the guards were asleep.

“I fell asleep five times. I have to pay 3 visses (*a Burmese measurement of weight*) chickens each time,” a villager who escaped to Thai-Burma border, Nai Tun, from Khaw-zar Chaungywa.

For one viss of chicken, the price is 5000 kyat so that Nai Tun had to pay 15,000 Kyat as a fine when he fell asleep during village guard duty. The army slept in their own military barracks and let the villagers perform the duties of village guards. Sometimes, they suddenly appeared and checked whether the guards asleep or not. Nai Hxx Lxx, from Toe-tat Ywa-thit village, was beaten seriously by LIB No. 31’s soldiers on January 6, 2007. When the army soldiers came and checked the guards, the guard was taking a toilet break. The soldiers accused him of failing in his role of guarding the entrance to the village. Nai Hxx Lxx was beaten with a bamboo stick on his face, body and knees. He suffered serious wounds to the face area.

In Sar-yar Mon village, Yebu Township, an extraordinary version of these guarding duties took place when the villagers had to guard the Burmese army’s troops. The soldiers went into villages and stayed inside villagers’ houses. Guards were placed underneath houses, whilst the army troops stayed inside with the owners

C. Forced Cultivation of Physic Nut Trees

The program of growing physic nuts started in November 2006 when the SPDC forced thousands of villages to grow this tree to produce bio-diesel for the future. Some villages have to grow one tin of physic nuts (15 Kilograms) per village but in some villages, the authorities ordered each household to grow 15 trees. Additionally, the villagers also have to buy physic nuts seedlings from army camps or an SPDC agricultural office, at 500 Kyat per seedling.

For the villages close to the town, like Mudon township, and Thanbyuzayat township, people have to buy three plants for 1,500 kyat. The villagers and town residents are forced to grow at least 3 seedlings along the fences of their homes. The villagers are also forced to grow in the areas which are beside the main roads and highways. If the people do not grow the physic nuts, the government will not recognize or approve citizenship for their family list. The government used the family member’s list (like a family birth certificate) to make it easier to get money from each household in the villages, and to force them to grow seedlings.

In Southern Ye, the conditions are different to elsewhere. Each household has to take 15 seedlings and grow them at an army base compound or on lands that were confiscated by army. The villagers have to take care of plants every morning and evening, watering them and applying fertilizer. According to a villager from Sar-yar Mon village, if the plants die, they have to pay compensation costs to the soldiers. They have to pay 500 kyat for each plant if it died and then have to re-grow the plants.

People were forced to grow some physic nuts close to the main highway from Rangoon to Tavoy. For the survival of physic nuts plants along the motor road, the concerned villagers have to take responsibility to water them during dry season. Some villagers are rotated by the village headmen for this duty. Each person has to give one hour of time to water the trees.

D. Road Construction

The civilians in southern Ye Township area were forced to repair the road which links Rangoon, the former capital, to Tavoy, the capital of Tenasserim Division. The Burmese army battalion assigned construction duty to the village headmen to repair the road for better transportation, according to a villager who was forced to repair the road and later escaped to the Thai-Burma border. Local inhabitants were forced to work, sometimes for a one week period. When the army took villagers, they said that they would pay 2,500 kyat per day for those who could come and work in the construction. The army commanders received payment from the construction company to pay wages for labourers in the construction, but the villagers said they never saw any wages from the army. The wages had been expropriated.

“One thing I feel is pain and I feel tired, they (the army) don’t let me rest. I have to dig the stones on the high mountain and throw it down to the ground during noon day. It is very hot. Then, I have to smash the stone,” said a village from Sar Yar Mon village.

This road construction in southern part of Ye township from Ye to Magi village, that passes through Khaw-za Sub-town, was completed in 2004 and it has also been repaired and rebuilt since by the local battalions

Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedback 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 feedback 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: [hurformcontact@yahoo.com](mailto:hurfomcontact@yahoo.com)
Website: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

using forced labour. At the end of rainy season in October, some parts of the roads are destroyed and the villagers are forced to repair these again.

IV. Forced Labor in Ethnic Areas and Livelihoods

After former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt was dismissed from the position, ILO had a limited role in collaborating with the regime, especially in monitoring the situation of forced labour in ethnic areas.

When the ILO or NGOs were being allowed into areas, they formerly informed Ministry of Home Affairs on the development of forced labour. But today, NGOs have to report not only to Ministry of Home Affairs, but they also have to talk to the local base battalions, to collaborate on the elimination of forced labour. New restriction policies have been applied to the international agencies and international NGOs, such that they cannot travel into many areas and are allowed only limited time, just one week, if they are allowed in at all.

Even though some NGOs reached remote areas, the Burmese Army didn't allow them to go to the areas by themselves. The Burmese Army follows the NGOs or provides government staff to accompany them. According to the new policy of the military government, every time international NGO's visit, the army must accompany them at all times.

People living in close proximity to large townships suffer far less from forced labor. They are aware that if the Burmese army uses forced labor in their own area they have recourse to inform the international media groups or tell NGO's. This in turn brings pressure to bear on the army from international groups. In ethnic areas by contrast, the villagers do not know where to go or what to do to eliminate forced labour. Most villagers are uneducated and some cannot even speak the Burmese language. Along with the constant conscription of forced labour, the villagers also suffer from difficulties with their livelihoods as a result of forced labour.

"I live in Pauk-pin-gwin village before. There was a lot of forced labor in the village. I could not do my home chores. My family has to make rice soup for our daily meals. I felt upset and I wanted to leave home. During that time, the Burmese army told me that if I moved to Khaw-za Sub-town, there would be no more forced labor. But when I arrived Khaw-za, there were more forced labor than my former village", said a villager from Pauk-pin-gwin.

Currently, IDPs live in the ceasefire areas, which are controlled by NMSP and they received security and protection from NMSP. MRDC (Mon Relief and Development Committee) provided food for them and some villagers still continue to stay in the area. But many IDPs move to Thailand. They go to work in Thailand in Samutprakan Province's fishing industries and other construction works near Bangkok.

For the IDPs, it is a constant struggle just to survive. They can attempt to grow gardens and rubber plants. However these gardens do not producing any fruit or rubber immediately. IDPs are hunting and growing vegetables in their areas for survival.



People forced to build road construction

There were 5000 IDPs in the liberated areas in 1995. Most displaced from southern Ye. After the ceasefire, NMSP has resettled IDPs in some villages and let some of them return to their native homes. But most of the IDPs and returned refugees continue to

stay in the ceasefire areas. IDPs hope they can go back to their homes at some point in the future when the Burmese political situation changes and a new democratic government exists.

V. Conclusion

The military government and its armed force, the Burmese Army do not have the 'political will' to eradicate forced labor countrywide. Additionally, they still allow local troops and authorities to collect taxes from the people as a way of railroading those villagers that cannot pay into forced labour.

Forced labour and taxation forces thousands of local inhabitants to flee from their homes and causes some to migrate into neighboring countries. The villagers who do not want to leave their homes face an extremely difficult situation, characterized by a lack of opportunity to earn income. Those that are able to make a limited income are liable to lose it in fines and taxes paid to the military. Those displaced in ceasefire zones also face difficulties for food security, education for children, and health care because of very limited assistance from the aid agencies to them.

The NMSP-SPDC ceasefire is not meant to be a 'final political solution' and it does not practically protect the human rights of the people in ethnic areas. The people in Mon areas have greatly suffered from gross human rights violations and the regime of the SPDC has shown that it does not respect internationally recognized human rights standards.

HURFOM

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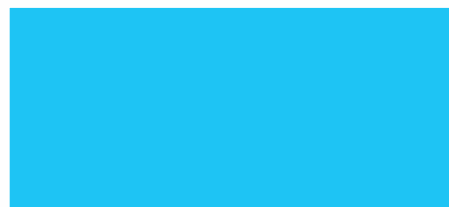
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