

The Mon Forum

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SPDC Followers are Convincing Pro-Government Groups in Mon State

August, 2007, Mon State

According to the decision of an emergency security meeting, held by top-level military officers in the Southeast Command in the second week of August, every township and village administration in Mon State would have to form secret security services under the arrangement of the township's Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA). The main purpose of forming the secret security services was to prevent the upcoming economic demonstrations by anti-government protestors and Buddhist monks.

In order to implement their decisions, leaders of the USDA in Chaung-Zone township have reportedly called on youths for security service and started carrying out their secret activities to convince the pro-government groups, such as the Women Affairs Group, the Maternal and Child Welfare Group, militia, Red Cross and the fire station in Chaung-Zone township to be activists.

According to one of HURFOM's field reporters, the Chaung-Zone township authorities and the USDA officer have been recruiting at least 10 people from each ward and village to join the pro-government group. The reporter stated that: "The main responsibility of these people is to



Photo of an emergency security meeting with top-level military officers in the Southeast Command

International Community Must Ensure for Democratization in Burma

When there are serial arrests of fuel price hike demonstrators on cities' streets by Burma's regime SPDC recently, many countries, except a few western countries, did not express their views on the protests. The SPDC's arrests of protestors showed that they will not have for any kind of tolerance on the practice of democratization in Burma, especially on the freedom of expression.

It is a doubt, whether the SPDC really wants to create Burma as a democratic country, even they did not tolerate such small peaceful demonstration that does not threaten any of their power.

ASEAN countries must have to show their opinion and put pressure to regime in Burma to ensure they are moving forward for democracy and release the peaceful protestors. Such demonstrations are always happening in many countries of ASEAN membership and even in China.

Without a tolerance to demonstration, it is hard to establish a democracy system in a country in which the government has to allow all citizens to practice basic democratic principles – freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly and freedom of demonstration.

It is needed to make sure the regime will allow all of these freedoms if it says to establish democratic country in Burma.

break down the mass if any demonstrations occur. They are armed with batons and other equipment and we could see them taking positions near the monasteries and the houses of NLD members.”

It was also reported that on the third week of August, the Mudon township's USDA officer had been hiring some unemployed persons to be recruited to their secret security services. According to the news report, there were 10 members in Phae-Doe village who met their criteria to be security members. Amongst the ten members, two were chosen as team leaders. Their details are as follows:

- U Win Hlaing – 38 years (team leader);
- U Aung Bu – 40 years (assistant team leader);
- U Thein Zan - 45 years;
- U Maung Ngae – 44 years;
- U Maung Htain – 40 years;
- U Aung Yee – 48 years;
- U Khin Maung – 41 years;
- U Bo Khine – 45 years;
- U Pan Shane – 38 years;
- U Aung Soe Moe – 27 years.

Similarly, in Kyaik-Ma-Yaw township, Mon State, the township TPDC and USDA officers have started recruiting secret security troops in order to prevent the mass demonstration.

Last month, the group from an unnamed District came to Kyaik-Ma-Yaw township and held a meeting

in the township USDA office. In the meeting, the head of the township USDA urged his secret security service members to organize the local inhabitants as much as they can. They also reminded the members not to send their monthly reports to the Head Quarter directly and send them through the District office. They also instructed the members to communicate with and organize other groups, such as Women's Affairs, Maternal and Child Welfare, militia, Red Cross and the township fire station.

Currently, the SPDC authorities are afraid of the news of Buddhist monks gearing up to demonstrations in the whole country and the offices of the USDA in every township in Mon State have been crowded with members and reportedly busy with continuous meetings.

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Villagers in Mon State are stuck with extortion imposed by Light Infantry Battalion No.31

7 September, 2007, Ye Township

Taung-Bone villagers were ordered to pay more taxes than they could afford. Taung-Bone village is in Ye Township, Mon State. According to the local people, the order was given by Captain Myint Thein from Light Infantry Battalion IB No. 31.

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The order stated that the village head had to take responsibility for finding 10 porters among Taung-Bone's villagers. If porters could not be found, the village head would have to collect 70,000 Kyat from the villagers.

Captain Myint Thein and his followers also collected 500 Kyat from each household to cover the Battalion's rations.

In late August, they collected 1700 Kyat from each household to cover the rations of the local militia and village security.

"Before, they collected 1500 Kyat per month but since August they've been collecting 1700 kyat," said Nai Kyaw, a 40 year old from Taung-Bone village.

"On top of this tax, we also have to pay other monthly taxes. We lose more than 2,000 Kyat in taxes per month" Nai Kyaw added. He also complained that they are stuck with extortion because they can't produce rubber from their rubber plantations during the rainy season and they are restricted from going from one village to another in order to sell things.

Moreover, Burmese soldiers from the Light Infantry Battalion No. 31 took villagers' motorbikes for the Battalion's own use. They had been taking 2 motorbikes from the village every day. The owners' of these motorbikes were not only forced to allow the soldiers to use their motorbikes but also had to give 1 gallon of gasoline a day.

The local people are facing a big challenge. They are being starved due to the high rate of taxation and many other compulsory orders given by the Burmese soldiers. It seems like there will be no relief, as the rainy season and SPDC imposed travel restrictions make earning money almost impossible.

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Burmese Soldiers commandeer villagers' motorbikes in Mon State

Han-Gan village, 27 August, 2007

It was reported that since 27 August, soldiers from the Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 299, have been commandeering villagers' motorbikes in Han-Gan village. Sergeant Aung Myint and his followers have been taking 3 motorbikes from the villagers everyday.

Han-Gan village is located in Ye Township, Mon State and LIB No. 299 is based in Koe-Mile. They also asked the village head to pay for gasoline. Because of this, the village head has had to collect money from villagers. They've been asking for 3 gallons of gasoline each day because they want 1 gallon per motorbike.

The soldiers also threatened to simply take bikes if no one would offer up their own.

According to Nai Myint from Han-Gan village, they stopped commandeering motorbikes last April, and briefly did it in July. They've since begun commandeering again. "Sergeant Aung Myint and his followers said that they would take my motorbike for a day but they kept it for 5 days. When they gave it back to me, it was almost destroyed because they crashed into something and generally used it carelessly. I had to repair it myself. This is the third or fourth time they've done something like this," said Nai Myint.

"They have been using my motorbike for several days and are keeping it in an outpost beside the railway in Han-Gan. Whenever I ask them to give it back, they just say that their work is not finished," Nai Myint added.

Villagers in Yin-Yae village are facing the same problem. A few months ago, a Yin-Yae villager's motorbike was lost after the soldiers commandeered it. The bike was being used by many soldiers and when they were asked about its disappearance, they pointed to each other and brushed the question off. The villager never did get his motorbike back. Villagers have since been worried about their motorbikes meeting a similar fate.

These villagers rely on their motorbikes. Without them, they cannot get to their jobs on the plantations, which is particularly damaging considering that on top of struggling to pay for gasoline, they now have to pay for repairs to motorbikes broken by the soldiers.

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Police extort money from arrested young people in the Mon village

The Mon Forum, Mudon Township, August 14, 2007

It was reported that on August 14, 2007, five youths from Hnee-padaw village in Mudon Township were arrested at night time by the police for sitting in a public rest-house along the street. Following the arrest the police demanded money from their parents for releasing them.

Police personnel from Kamawet police station entered Hnee-padaw village at night and arrested the youths.

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Meeting with newly arrived IDP family

Since late July 2007, the SPDC’s Light Infantry Battalions (LIB), No.’s 583, 582 and 591, all led by Commander Col. Zaw Win have been launching military operations against Mon splinter groups near Ye Township. Because of these operations, Mon residents based in the area have been facing serious human rights violations. During the first week of July 2007, more than 100 Mon families settled in Bayoun-Ngae village and Han Gan village, near Khaw Zar Sub-Township were instructed to leave.

Some families who found it difficult to move to a new place in such a short amount of time decided to flee to the Thai-Burma border as IDPs. Some are living on the border, in areas under the control of ethnic armed forces, and some have moved into Thailand as migrant workers.

Recently, HURFOM conducted intensive interviews with some displaced people about why they fled from their homes. The following is a personal account of a displaced person from Bayoun-Ngae village, Ye Township, Mon State.

Name:	Nai M— A—
Age/Sex:	42 Years, Male
Nationality/Religion:	Mon/Buddhist
Native Place:	Bayoung-Ngae village, Ye Township, Mon State
Status:	Married with two children
Spouse name	Mi Y—A—, 37 Years
Occupation:	Farmer
Date of interview	22 nd August, 2007

“Burmese soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion No. 591 ordered people from our village to leave the area after we were accused of supporting the Mon rebel armed group led by Nai Bin, which is known as the Mon Restoration Party (MRP).”

“The LIB No. 591 troops were deployed to our village at the beginning of July 2007. Since that time, we’ve had no safety in our village. On the night of July 4th, Burmese soldiers burned down two houses, one of which belonged to my family. My wife and I were at our farm outside of the village, but my

kids were at home. They ran as soon as the soldiers showed up. They burned everything and we’ve been left with nothing.”

“Some of my neighbors’ houses have also been destroyed. Most of the villagers are moving to Khaw-zar sub-town and Han-Gan village. If we followed them we would face many difficulties because we have nothing. So, after talking it over with my wife, we decided to come here.”

“I have been abused by the Burmese soldiers many, many times. Last year, Burmese troops from Infantry Battalion No. 31 entered the village and demanded information about the Mon rebel group. I was on my way home from my farm when suddenly they captured me and began to ask questions. I don’t understand Burmese all that well so I couldn’t really answer them. They thought I wasn’t answering them on purpose, so they kicked me in the face with their boots and stepped on my head. Blood ran out of my mouth. I had to go to the Ye town clinic to get my wounds taken care of.”

“We had to pay a lot of fees to the village PDC and the Burmese Army based in Khaw-zar sub-town. We often had to pay a forced labor fee, a porter fee, a self-reliance development fee and a food supply for village militia fee. We also had to pay road and

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bridge construction fees two or three times a month. These fees made it impossible to take in a sufficient income.”

“The village headmen and the Burmese battalion needed us to work for them every month. If we didn’t want to work, we had to either find somebody to work in our place or pay money to the village headmen and army officers to hire the labor themselves. This type of fee is known as a ‘forced labor fee’.”

“Normally, the village headmen collected it once a month. The fee was between 3,000 Kyat to 5,000 Kyat each month. Some wealthy houses could pay this huge amount, but for families like ours, it was nearly impossible. If we didn’t pay, we were sometimes taken as unpaid labor. Normally, women had to clear grasses, bushes and trees along the roads and by military barracks. Men had to do heavier work. They had to fence the military compounds and dig bunkers and trenches around the barracks.”

“If the Burmese Army had a military offensive in our area, we would have to go and serve as porters. I have been forced to serve as a porter numerous times. If you didn’t want to do it, you would have to pay between 10,000 Kyat to 20,000 Kyat each time you were asked. They said they would use this money to hire a substitute. I couldn’t afford to pay such a

large amount of money, so I had to go with them.”

“Burmese troops used to torture me, not really major torture but things like kicking me in the back with their boots. I have seen some porters who have been beaten by the soldiers very badly. These porters sometimes could not walk and they would be left behind without any medical treatment.”

“Our village militia was formed by people under the control of the local battalion, and the village headmen usually collected money for a militia fee. It was not collected on a monthly basis but we would have to pay between 5,000 Kyat and 7,000 Kyat each time to provide for the cost of food, uniforms and other facilities. Another type of fee is the ‘village security fee’. This fee goes to both the battalion and village militia forces. We paid between 1,000 Kyat to 1,500 Kyat each month for that.”

“As you know, we have nothing now. We have to start from zero. We had land and property, but it’s all been taken. We’ve decided to stay here as long as we can and I will find jobs to support my family. We feel living here is safer than our own home.”

Name-	Nai P— M—
Age/ Sex-	29/Male
Location-	Han Gan village, Ye Township
Occupation	Farmer
Religion-	Buddhist
Ethnicity-	Mon
Family members-	4 Person
Marital status-	married
Date of interview	20 th August, 2007

“I came to this new place over six months ago. One of our siblings was already here before I came. Another one came last year and the last one came with me. So, we all are here because our village is not safe for us to live. Now, just only our parents left because they are too old to travel. We faced not only unsafe but also poor to live there. Our village is not peaceful as well as lack of security.

The soldiers (troops from IB 31, based in Khaw-Zar) took a lot of our properties. Sometime they took by themselves and they sometime forced us to give them. They took not only betel nuts but also its trees. We had to do according to their order and we cannot be wrong even just a little. If we do

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something wrong, we will be punished or blamed by the soldiers. So, we are afraid of them and we had to do everything as they wish. Once, I remembered that they forced our family to give them 1000 seeds of betel nuts and 500 betel nut plans. At that time, I had to carry them to their office. The Burmese soldiers also took our roofing thatch. Sometime they went to our farm and cut it by themselves. When they cut it, they didn't use the method as we do and they destroyed all until we cannot keep sustainability for next year. When we cut thatch at least we need to leave its bud and three sheets. However, we could not say anything although we saw the Burmese soldiers cut them without leaving anything.

I was forced to work ("lout arr pay" in Burmese) so many time that I could not count. I had been forced to work since I was thirteen years old. I had to work in rail-way, construction of Ye- Tawae high-way, cutting trees, carrying soil, crushing stone, sharpening the tools for battalion and making the canal. When we were forced to work for several days, we had to sleep in the canal of the field work or near the stream of the forest. We also had to go and work whenever the soldiers need us. I had been also forced to do as a porter for two times. At the first time, I was eighteen years old and lived in my village. I had to carry heavy things and walk in the dark night without any light.

Yes, I have been beaten by the Burmese soldier with the bamboo as tick as upper leg one time because I was late just a few minutes to attend their meeting. They beat everybody who was late to join their meeting together with me. They asked us to queue and beat one by one. Moreover, they also ordered us to demolish the houses as a second punishment. We then also had to send the valuable things from demolished houses to rail way station so that they can bring to other places easily. The other remained things were destroyed into small pieces and were burnt. Most of these houses owners are people who run out of the village because they fought again the Burmese soldiers and were afraid of them.

If we calculated the amount of money which we had to pay them per year, it would be more than the amount we earn. There were many tax extortions in our village. That is one of reasons which pushed me to come and work in Thailand to be able to save enough money. Only then, my parents who remained in the village can pay taxes. Before I left, in my village, the soldiers from LIB 343 closed the village. They

ordered that no one can go and work outside the village. But if we pay, we can go. So, every villager who has their farms outside of the village has to pay to work in their own farms. Sometime, they didn't allow us to go to our plantation more than one month, especially, during the time when we can earn a lot of money from our farm. We had to do a letter which is a permit to go outside the village or to our plantation. We had to pay Kyat 200 to 500 per letter and it was useful just from 5 am to 5pm, 12 hours.

I miss my home, my parents and village. I really want to go back but I cannot go back until the situation in our village changes. My parents miss me too but I can do nothing. I am worried for my parents because most of our neighbors fled from the village. Most people, especially young people, are trying to leave our village as soon as possible.

Some Acronyms in This Issue

SPDC-	State Peace and Development Council,
IDPs-	Internally displaced persons,
IB -	Infantry Battalion (<i>of the Burmese Army</i>),
LIB-	Light Infantry Battalion (<i>of the Burmese Army</i>),
MOMC-	Military Operations and Management Command
USAID-	United States Agency for International Development,
PDC-	Peace and Development Council

Report

Endless Abuses and the Creation of Poverty in Southern Mon State

I. Summary

This report focuses on the updated situation about the ongoing Human Rights abuses committed by the SPDC and its armed forces, troops of Burmese Army, that creates the poverty and unsustainable life of the rural civilians in southern Mon State. Most of the abuses which described in this report were always happening in the rural areas under the control of this ruling SPDC. The major abuses are which covered in this report are forced relocation, forced labour, looting, confiscation of land and properties which artificially create poverty and hunger to population in rural areas of southern Mon State.

II. Geographical analysis on Southern Mon State

Most of the local inhabitants in southern Mon State, especially in Ye Township, are mainly farmers who are growing paddy and fruit trees in the area. Many villagers who are inhabitants in coastal area involve in fishing works along the area. The majority of the areas are covered with rubber, fruit and betel nut plantations especially in eastern Ye Township and with paddy-fields in western part of the area. There are also many thousands acres of forests also cover in many part of the area. Therefore, geographically, both Mon and Karen rebels could take base and launch their military activities against the Burmese Army properly. For many decades, the troops of Burmese Army could not suppress the rebellion.

As the local people are Mon inhabitants, normally, the rebel soldiers have gotten supports from the villagers and they were constantly accused as rebel-supporters very often. With this accusation, many civilians from this township area had been killed, tortured and some women were abused during the course of armed conflict between NMSP and successive military regimes until NMSP dealt ceasefire with the then military regime.

After NMSP entered for ceasefire agreement in mid-1995, the abuses that related to suspicion of rebel-supporters have been reduced. But a Mon splinter armed group occurred and has still operated their military activities against the Burmese Army especially in both southern and northern parts of Ye Township along the seacoast since over eight years ago. Thus, the civilians outside of NMSP control area have been still suffered from human rights violations that related to suspicion of rebel-supporters.

Additionally, in duration before and after NMSP ceasefire, the civilians in both Ye town and villagers in various villages in Southern Mon State had to provide various types of taxation, contribute unpaid labor, food and other supplies for the military battalions, which have been active in the whole township area. Since 1999, the Burmese Army deployed a main military force, Military Operational Management Command (MOMC No. 19) and its 10 light infantry battalions and 3 artillery battalions in the area. Currently, hundreds of Burmese soldiers arrived into the areas and they have constantly restricted the movement of the people, forced them to contribute labour in development projects and in military deployment.

Since late July, 2007, the Burmese Army launched a military offensive against a Mon splinter group, led by Nai Bin in southern part of Ye Township and have committed various types of human rights violations against the local civilians.

Among various types of lawlessness, the looting, extortion, stealing and corruption are involved. For the ethnic civilians in the rural areas, they could not find any legal aid to protect their rights at all. Even they found their properties are looted in front of them by the soldiers, they could not stop that happening and could not ask for help for the village headmen in their communities.

The detail information of various types of lawlessness situations *which artificially create poverty and hunger to civilians in rural areas of southern Mon State* are mentioned as below:

III. Looting by the Burmese battalions

The cases of looting of civilians' belongings were reported to have occurred after clash between Burmese Army troops and the Mon Splinter group led by Nai Bin near Han-gan village, Ye township, Mon State. Most of the news report (from our field reporters) during July and August, 2007 said that the troops of Burmese Army has constantly involved in stealing and looting of the civilians' belongings in the conflict areas. Normally in the rural areas of conflict zones, the Burmese Army suspected all villages as 'rebel camps' and they looted the villagers' properties as they liked when they went into villages.

In some villages, when the troops of Burmese Army came into their villages, all men fled and tried to escape not to be arrested as 'porters' or faced torturing. Hence, when the Burmese troops arrived into their villages, they looted things and properties what they liked. They took not only livestock: chicken, duck, cattle and others for their foods, but they took other properties such as Motorbike, bicycle and others valuable things in the villages.

In the past over two months ago, the SPDC's Military Operation Management Command (MOMC) No. 19 ordered over 100 households to relocate from Baround village, to area near Han-Gan village (another big Mon village under SPDC control) in Ye Township. Many villagers begged the Commander Col. Zaw Win and his troops from the battalion LIB No. 591 not to move. But the battalions denied the requests and forced to move the villagers to the villages near Khaw Zar Sub-Town. Most villagers have to leave their gardens, crops and farms there.

"The Burmese Army's troops looted various things from our village, when they arrived into the villages," reported by Nai + + + + + who recently arrived to the border.

Some Burmese Army troops from some battalion have continuously involved in looting of civilians' belongings from one village to another. There were some looting cases by the Burmese Army's troops from LIB No. 591, in Baround and the villages near Han-Gan village areas.

As instances,

On July 20, 2007, about 10 soldiers from LIB No. 591 led by Captain Hla Moe went into the eastern part of Baround village in the evening, and the soldiers checked every house in the village and took properties that they found.

"They climbed Nai P + + + T + + house and took livestock and other valuable properties that they found. Nai P + + + T + + was already left from his house. But the soldiers took the properties even the house owner were presence in some houses," said a villager.

On July 22, 2007, the same troops from LIB No.591 led by Captain Hla Moe went into Baround village, and ordered remain households to immediately move from the village. Some villagers begged the Captain not to move.

"Some villagers were even blamed of being rebel supporters and beaten by the Burmese troops. When the villagers left, they (the Burmese soldiers) looted the properties which belong to the villagers. They arrived into village, about 8: 30 p.m. and they took livelihood and some household properties. Soon after they arrived into village, they gathered all men in one place and then climbed onto every house and committed looting. Some villagers tried to complain in the new place but no one responded their cases in Khaw Zar Sub Town." Reported by an witness from Han-Gan village, Ye township, Mon State.

Similarly, On July 29, the Burmese battalion No. 343, which operated under MOMC 19, based in Aru-raung village, entered the Han-Gan village and called a meeting with the villagers. In the meeting, the commander ordered the villagers who owned the gardens in Baround village not to go and work.

"I made a lot of invest in my farm in Bayoun village. Now, they restricted me not work there. I will get a big trouble if I couldn't make income. Last month, some of my lime fruits have been looted by Burmese soldier from LIB No. 591 in my farm. That why I worry. If I was not allowed to go to my farm, I am sure they will took away and destroy my fruits" Nai Kyaw (not real name), 34 year old farmer from Han-Gan village claimed.

Many military battalions in the conflict zones similarly committed looting in ethnic villages. They looted foods generally for the meals but they looted other valuable properties for their income or for their families.

When thousands of troops poured into southern part of Mon State, those soldiers were involved in looting of the Mon people's foods and properties in a widespread situation. The Burmese Army also sent the commando troops to the areas and the village headmen in the areas have to provide more foods for those troops. Besides they asked food cost, they also looted foods and other properties in the village.

In the first week of August, 2007, the Burmese Army sent more than a hundred commando troops to Chaung-Taung, Kaloh, Han-gan and Koe-mile villages to launch the military operations against the Mon rebel group led by Nai Bin. They have taken bases in many Mon villages near Han-Gan village area and asked food costs from the village headmen very often. As most village headmen were afraid of being mistreated by the soldiers, they have paid the requested amount of money to the soldiers.

"In Koe-mile village, the village administration group collected Kyat 1,000 to 2,000 from each household per week to provide food costs for about 25 Burmese troops from MOMC 19 battalion. The troops took bases about one month in Koe-Mile and the village headmen have to provide food costs for them every week.

"Even the village headmen were providing food costs, however, the soldiers also stole livestock in the village as they liked. Even daytime, they went to some and shot the chickens which were raised under houses. They also gathered vegetables in the villagers' gardens without asking any permission."

Similarly when they went to Marn-aung village, near Koe-mile village, Ye Township, the Burmese troops from LIB No. 343 also committed Looting of the villagers' properties and the cases have been similarly happened in other villages in deep southern Ye Township, Mon State.

As another instance,

"In second week of August 2007, a military column from the Burmese battalion LIB No. 299 led by Captain Nay Myo and his troops launched their military offensive again the rebel group near Marn-aung village, which located about two miles from Koe-mile village, Ye Township. At the result, the local residents who have to receive the troops in their villages were suffered. The soldiers looted and killed their livestock such as ducks, chickens, pigs and even cattle for their foods even in front of the villagers. They did not ask any allowance from the village headmen, but just shot and took them away." Nai K++ B++, 26 year old young man who recently fled to the border reported.

"The commanders never punished their soldiers whenever we complained about their looting. They shot livestock mostly in the villages and shot to cattle, oxen, cows and goats, outside of the villages. The Mon communities normally raise their livestock in the village and raise the cattle to use them in the farms," he added.

IV. Torture and inhumane treatment

In their ongoing efforts to cut ties between the local villagers and the Mon splinter armed group led by Nai Bin, the SPDC uses threats and tortures to achieve their goals. During the armed conflict between the troops of Burmese Army under the MOMC 19 and the Mon rebel group near Han-gan village, HURFOM field reporters reported that in July 2007, the Burmese troops abducted and tortured several villagers accused of having ties to the rebel group.

As an instance,

After the armed clash between the Burmese army and the Mon rebel group, troops of soldiers from the Light Infantry Battalion No. 591 arrested the accused villagers as rebel-supporters, who live in their farm between Koe-mile and Baround village, Ye township. The soldiers tied each of the accused villagers and brought them to Han-gan where the battalion temporarily based according to eye witnesses from Koe-mile village. Three local famer, Nai G+++ (50 years), Nai K++ G++ (35 years) and Mehm M++++ O++ (24 years), were tortured by the soldiers during inquiry about one of their friends, Nai Gyi, a member in the Mon Splinter group led by Nai Bin.

"Battalion Commander Col. Zaw Win pressed the blade of his knife to their skin, nearly drawing blood, and pounded their stomachs with a large pestle," said a villager who did not want to mention his name. The SPDC troops then burned down four huts outside of Koe-mile village. They also took away some vegetables and fruits from the villagers' farm.

In another incident, in the second week of July 2007, the Burmese troops coerced two villagers into revealing the locations of the Mon rebel personnel. First the Captain Hla Moe from LIB 591 asked the information about the rebel group to two suspected villagers, Nai A-Kyaw (40 years) and Nai Win Oo (about 35 years). When the two men said “no”, the soldiers started tortured them. The soldiers pounded the men’s heads, beat them and poured water down their throats. The villagers were then forced to lead the troops through the jungle to the rubber plantation, where three Burmese soldiers have been killed by the Mon rebel group in the clash of the last week of June, 2007.

HURFOM’s field reporter also documented a case of torture committed by a Sergeant from LIB No. 586 during August 21 and August 24, 2007. The victim Maung San Oo (not real name), a 28 years old, from Toe-thet-ywar-thit village, was arrested by Burmese soldiers led by Sergeant Thet Zaw Oo and his troops. Maung San Oo was arrested at the edge of Koe-Mine Village, where he was attending the funeral of a relative.

“He was beaten on his back and legs with a bamboo pole. His face is covered with black welt from the torture he received. They accused him of being a reporter for a Mon rebel group. They interrogated him and when they were dissatisfied with his answers, they beat him. We can hear him crying in pain, even from far away,” said a witness from Toe-Thet-Ywa-Thit who didn’t give her name.

Mg San Oo is currently seeing a former New Mon State Party medic because he cannot afford to have his wounds taken care of in a hospital. He also served as a corporal in the Mon National Liberation Army for two years. He left the MNLA in order to take care of his parents, whose farmland had been confiscated. He had been supporting them by clearing other people’s gardens and plantations.

In some cases, torture come along with properties extortion. Another example of torture committed by troops of soldier from LIB No. 586, under Military Operations and Management Command (MOMC 19) are shown as below.

On August 23, San Win Aung, 23 years old, and his sister, Ma Myint, 26 years old, both of Yin-dein villagers, were on the way to sell vegetables when they were beaten by a group of soldiers under the leadership of Sergeant Myint Zaw. The soldiers were from the Light Infantry Battalion No. 586, under Military Operations and Management Command (MOMC) No. 19.

San Win Aung and his sister are retailers. They bought vegetables from other people’s plantations and sold them. When the soldiers began to take the vegetables, San Win Aung begged them to take anything but the mushrooms, as they were expensive. According to a witness, Sergeant Myint Zaw responded by kicking him and screaming at him. He also slapped Ma Myint and asked her if she wanted to die. He then flipped over their trays and crushed their vegetables.

A fellow vegetable seller and friend of Ma Myint said that “they have been doing this sort of thing for a long time. We try to run away whenever we see them coming. Sometimes we give them something before they ask.” Later, San Win Aung and his sister informed the village heads and urged them to take action. So far these pleas have been in vain.

According to villagers living near the Battalions, the villages around the area are facing the same problem as Yin-dein villagers. The violations are thought to be occurring due to a shortage of army provisions and the military’s subsequent order to their soldiers to find food however and wherever they can.

V. On going abuses: Movement restriction and relocation

Besides the looting committed by the soldiers, the Burmese Army also restricted the movement of the local villagers. It was quite inconvenient for the farmers who have farms far from the villages, and many of them could not work in the limited time in their farms. In the consequences of the forcible relocation of a village and to control the situation in the area, curfew was clamped in the entire Khaw-zar sub Township by a SPDC’s military battalion under the Military Operation Management Command No.19, Moulmein.

As an instance,

The curfew orders came from Light Infantry Battalion LIB No. 583 based in Kyaung-ywa village on July 7, after it relocated over a hundred houses in Baround village by destroying and torching homes and severely

torturing villagers in that day. This battalion was replaced by LIB No.343 based in Aru-taung village after the curfew was imposed.

The curfew entails that villagers including those who live in plantations have to inform the battalion immediately if they have important and significant news about Mon insurgent. If they do not know, they will be punished and can be expelled from the township. Anyone who goes outside of their homes after 9 p.m, they have to use candle light and did not allow using electric light. Even in case of emergencies, such as rushing patients to the hospital people have to make do with candles. If villagers flout the order the Burmese Army battalion can do what ever it wants to, which could include shoot at sight.

The curfew has been imposed not only in Khaw Zar Sub Township, but also in Han-gan and Kaloh villages in Ye Township. As long as the curfew is on, the villagers have been prohibited to go to the plantations.

“It (the curfew) has been clamped in every village. If the villagers violate the curfew they will be punished by the battalion,” a Han-gan villager who requested not to use his name, in Ye Township said.

Since the troops under the command of No.19 Military Operation Management Command (MOMC) based in Ye, launched a military offensive against Mon insurgents in southern Ye township, in Khaw Zar Sub township area, over 300 villagers, comprising 100 households, were forcibly relocated from Bayoun-ngae village, Ye Township. At the moment, those villagers are at a loss to find shelter in new place after being forced to relocate.

“At present, almost all families from Baround village have gone to Han-gan village. Local military authorities have done nothing to resettle them. They are finding it difficult to find space to resettle,” Nai Ngae, 35, a Han-gan villager said. They were asked to leave their homes and relocate on July 2, after Burmese troops from the Light Infantry Battalion No.583 fought Mon rebels outside the village. More than 60 villagers were beaten up on the suspicion of supporting the Mon rebels.

“Three families together resettled in some Han-gan villager’s house. Some Bayoun-ngae villagers who have relatives in Han-gan, went to their homes,” a villager said. Some pleaded with Han-gan villagers who have space to allow them to stay temporarily, Nai Ngae added. Most of their belongings from their home were brought here. But some people are still going back to Baround village to get what they left behind.

“My cow-cart and heavy belongings have not been brought to Han-gan village yet,” an anonymous relocated villager added.

According to villagers, the relocated villagers had abandoned their farms and plantations. The military government has imposed a curfew and locals are using candle light at night and have been asked to inform the Burma Army about the movement of Mon rebels.

VI. Confiscation/ destruction of property/Taxation

Case I. July 31-Aug 2, 2007, Kaloh village and villages near Ye Town:

According to a land lost victims who recently fled from Ye Township, the local battalion is still forcing the rubber plantations owners to pay money as the contracts fee in order to tap rubber in their own plantations near Ye township. The villagers explained as below:

“The army gave me a contract for this year after I agree to pay Kyar 950 per rubber trees. I owned 1,000 plants and so I needed to pay them over 900,000. I don’t have this amount of cash to provide. But I have no job apart from these rubber plantations. So, I need to some money from somebody else,” according to Nai Shwe Hlay, 45 year old local farmer. At first, Nai Shwe Hlay have about ten acre of rubber plantations and this battalion confiscated seven acre of them in 2001. Light Infantry Battalion No. 586 was led by Lt. Col. That Tun, based in Ye Town and this instruction was directly come from him, a source closed to battalion explained.

“They (the battalions) don’t even think how people survive and instead, they seized the lands which belonged to our villagers. Those confiscated lands are full of rubber plantations. After they seized, they are ready to make money from the confiscated lands because everything was done by our villagers’ sweat. Even some land lost villagers were ordered to stop working from their own land because of failed to provide rubber taxes to them (the battalions),” said Nai Naing Oo, a resident from Ye whose land was seized by Captain Tun Zaw from LIB No.586 in 2005.

On the end of July 2007, the head of the Battalion LIB No.586 hold a meeting with 28 local land owners in Kaloh village and announced that contracts would no longer be given to the owners to tap rubber, land owners said. The army gave contracts to only four owners whose plantations are close to the battalion precincts in Kaloh village, Ye township, Mon State. The four owners paid Kyat 900 for each rubber plant for extracting sap for a year. The four owners were given about 20,000 rubber plants to tap on contract.

“We signed the contract. But we were told we have to pay Kyat 950 for a plant. When we read the contract, we refused to sign because what was said differed with contract. In the contract it was 700 Kyat. The army officers told us that the contract was prepared by Military Operation Management Command No. (19) in Ye,” a land owner said.

The remaining plants were given on contract to a businessman, who is close to the army, the land owner said. According to the contract, the land owner has to pay half the amount before August 10 while the rest has to be paid depending on the order. The military authorities seized over 305 acres of land for LIB No.586 in 2001. The land was owned by local villagers and it had about 50,000 rubber plants.

Case II: Money extortion by Arbitrary Arrests

It was reported that on August 14, 2007, five youths from Hnee-padaw village in Mudon Township were arrested at night time by the police for sitting in a public rest-house along the street. Following the arrest the police demanded money from their parents for releasing them. Police personnel from Kamawet police station entered Hnee-padaw village at night and arrested the youths.

“Traditionally Mon youth always wait for their female friends at the public rest-house,” a Hnee-padaw youth said. But the police did not accept the argument and booked them under the “law act of living in shadow” and demanded Kyat 100,000 per youth for their release. Similarly on August 10, the police from Kamawet arrested 11 youths from Kwan-Hlar village and demanded money.

“Three of my friends who are late to back their home from outing were fined by the security police troops led by Khin Soe, a member of the middle ranks in Kamawet Police station. Each of them have to pay Kyat 30,000 as fine,” according to A Myo, 23 year old young man from Kwan-Hla, Mudon Township.

Villagers are extremely unhappy with the arrest of the innocent youth given the habit of the police to extort money on the slightest pretext. “It is totally not fair. Most young people and teenager in every place might visit to their friends in night times. This is the nature of the people. I recognize that this events is only for raising their own funds,” claimed by Nai Gyi (not real name), 57 year old man whose son was fined by the local police forces from Kwan Hla village.

Case III: Taxation

The Southeast Command Commander based in Moulmein, ordered the whole Township Peace and Development Councils to collect funds from the people to provide financial aid to the Basic Education High Schools (BEHS) in Mon State. The commander Major General Thet Naing Win had promised in July that the authorities would make about 10 lakh Kyat (US\$ 783.4) available to the BEHS which had fared well in the examination with over 50 percent pass figures. But the fund was not allocated by the Ministry of Education. So he ordered the Mon State’s Education Department that the funds to be collected from the people.

“This is the only method to assist the funds to the education. It is like what we they called, “self-help” program. Everything comes from people. They don’t even think about how people survive. And what are the roles and the obligations of the government. Where the state’s education budgets going to use for? As you know, People are currently facing huge problems to survive their livelihood in Mon State,” claimed by a former Mon politician who currently live in Moulmein.

“The Moulmein TPDC has earmarked 300,000 Kyat for each large private hostel, 100,000- 200,000 Kyat for each medium sized hostel and 30,000 Kyat for one small hostel. They said it has to be a donation from the residents”, said an anonymous teacher. The teacher recalled that the Township Peace and Develop Council authorities had told them that opening hostels is illegal for teachers, but they would allow it for survival. The small hostels paid the money to the education department and the remaining hostels paid to the TPDC authorities, according to the teacher.

Similarly Moulmein Township, plantation owners, businessmen, and other rich people in Thanphuzayart Township were forcibly ordered to pay over 42 lakh Kyats (about US \$ 3206.1) by the TPDC.

That’s how the Moulmein TPDC collected the fund to give to the BEHS and students who passed with distinction in grade 10. “All TPDC authorities try to collect the fund in their various ways,” said a head of a school in Mon State.

VII. Population displacement

After being seriously tortured, looting, extortion, restriction and forced locations, as a result, many inhabitants who have been suffered from these abuses planned to escape to avoid mistreatment. When analyzed the main causes of displacement, many displaced persons explained that they were constantly forced to move from their village, their properties were looted by the Burmese Army and some villager said, their movement was restricted that meant they were not allowed to go to their farms and plantations or not allowed to stay at night time. Due to the Mon rebel’s guerilla warfare in the area, the SPDC Burmese battalions LIB No. 591, 586 and 343 which operated under MOMC No. 19 ordered the local civilians from the above mentioned areas to not go and work in their farms or plantations, which were outside of their villages.

According to a field staff of the Mon Relief and Development Committee (MRDC), during the first week of July and August 2007, at least 500 families were forcibly relocated by the Light Infantry Battalion No. 591 as the punishment for supposedly the Mon rebels’ troops.

“When I was in the field work in the New Mon State Party’s controlled area, I have recorded about 40 families in my IDPs list in order to support some foods and resettlement arrangements. Most of them told me that they have been ordered to move quickly even though they tried to beg the Burmese soldiers not to move. Some villagers even have to leave their farm, oxen and properties in their houses.” He added.

A HURFOM field reporter working in the conflict areas documented the cases that some villagers tried to go and live in the new place which situated near Khaw-Zar Sub-Town. But most of the villagers have not been able to find a new settle for them and some decided to enter to Thailand illegally.

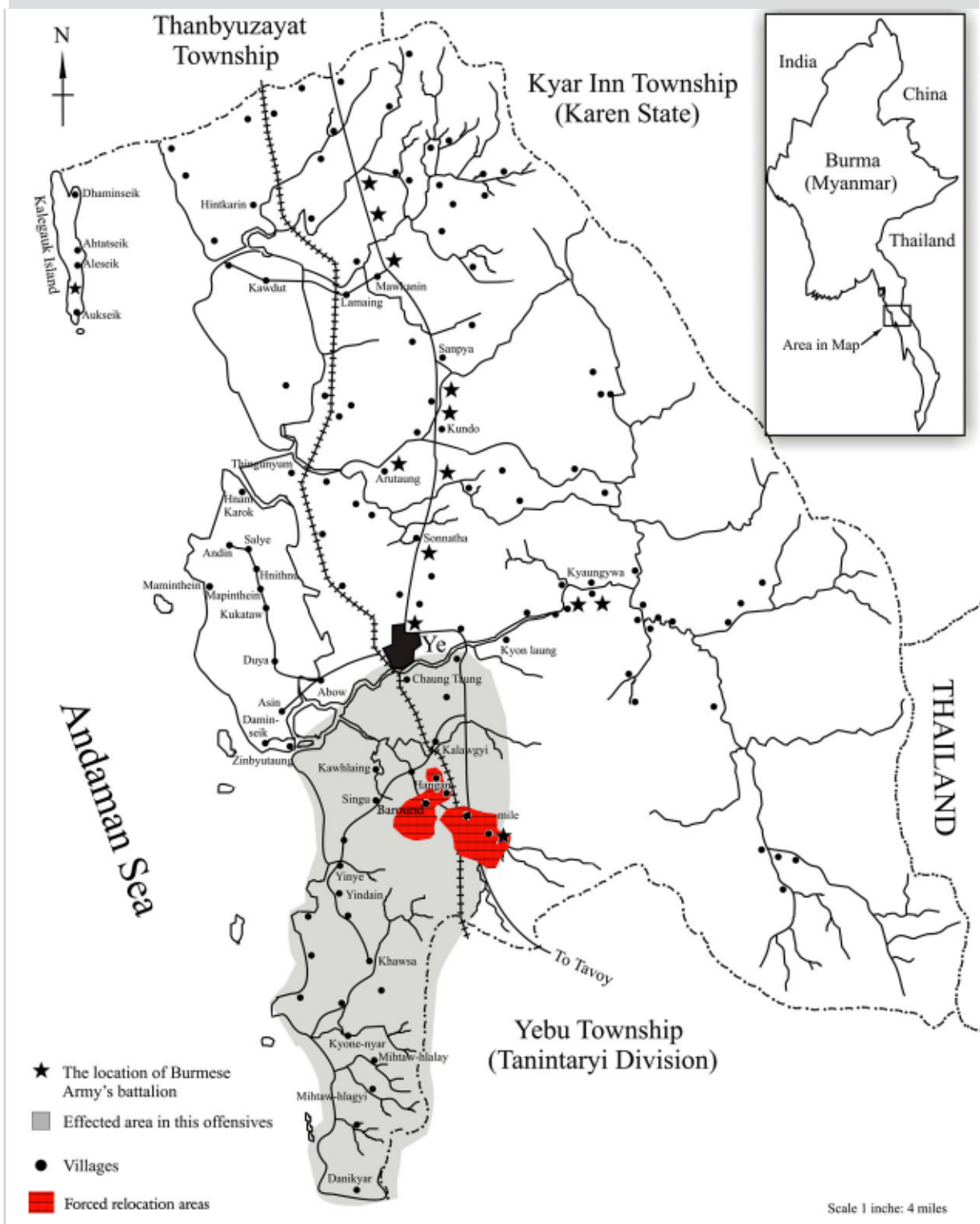
“I don’t even know how my family can start our life from the beginning,” said a 45 year old man who fled from Baround village told to reporter. Many poor families who faced food-shortage problems planned to escape from their villages. Many of them arrived to Thailand-Burma border and displaced in area under the control of New Mon State Party, which agreed ceasefire to the current regime.

When the villagers fled to the border area, they did not dare to travel along the main motor road. They came across into forests and jungles until they could reach to NMSP area. When the arrived into NMSP controlled area it was safe for them. There are over 10 villages in the NMSP ceasefire area, which resettled the displaced persons, who escaped from conflict area.

VIII. Conclusion

The military operations have been intensified since late 2004 by Burmese Army troops in order to uproot the activities of a Mon splinter group which has less than 50 troops. But the Burmese Army has no ability to uproot these troops and just mostly made revenge against the local Mon villagers. As a result of this offensive and human rights violations against the local villagers, the following situation happen among the communities.

Imposing fears: The community people especially the villagers in southern part of Ye Township are living so in grave fear. For many years, the local villagers are so afraid of talking with authorities and soldiers. They are also too powerless to protect their own rights. Most of the community leaders, village heads and Buddhist monks are also seriously punished and themselves could not protect their own villagers.



Map of recent forced relocations areas in Southern Mon State, Burma

Difficulties in livelihood: the movement restriction makes a serious difficult for the local villagers to travel to their workplaces: rice farmlands, orchard and rubber plantations, seas (for fishermen). The limitation of access to workplace creates shortage of income for the local villagers. As a result, many villagers even inside their villages faced food-shortage problems and other problems of getting supplementary foods and health care.

Displacement: Many villagers tried to flee from their home villages after they could not tolerate on the abuses and violations. But it is difficult for them to abandon their homes and other valuable properties. Many poor families which have less assets and properties in their villages could decide quickly to leave from their villages and fled to other areas. Many of them fled to Thailand-Burma border and some of them crossed the border into Thailand, as under the name of ‘migrant workers’, but in really they are ‘refugees’.

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
Website: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

SPDC Followers Earn Illegal Money with Different Method in Mon State

In Kyite-Ma-Yaw township, the leaders of the Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) were cooperating with the new village heads to accomplish the Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC). Every one of these new village heads had spent 200,000 Kyat in hiring brokers to acquire recommendations from Special Brand No. (208): regional military command commander; division commander; and battalion commander. Now these new village heads are abusing their power to find illegal money.

They are cooperating with TPDC so that they can directly negotiate with the Deputy Engineer (D E). They are selling electronic meter-boxes to Ta-Ra-Nar villagers with the price of 2,000,000 kyat per meter-box. Similarly, they also sell the meter-boxes to Dam-Ma-Tha and Kaot-Pa-lai villagers at this price.

On 15th August 2007, the organizers from TPDC and VPDC began to collaborate by selling a maximum of 10 electronic meter-boxes to each village. It was the responsibility of a Pain-Nae-Tone villager, U Chit Oo (regional organizer) to persuade people to become members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA). By becoming a member of the USDA, villagers were able to buy electronic meter-boxes at the lower price of 700,000 kyat. U Chit Oo sold up to 10 meter-boxes to each village.

A Zar-Tha-Pyin villager called U Soe Aung, who had a good relationship with the military officers in Nay-Pyi-Daw, was selling electronic meter-boxes in many villages: Nyaung-Bin-Sade; Kaot-tat; Kaot-Swae; Ta-Ra-Nar;

Dam-Ma-Tha; Kaot-Pa-Lai; Kaot-Bain; Min-Your; and Kaot-Pauk.

Moreover, the head mistress of the basic middle school of Ta-Ra-Nar village, whose husband is the organizer in USDA, was acting as an agent for the Association, selling USDA member cards. The prices were 1500-1700 kyat for elder people and 500-700 kyat for students.

Because of USDA's abuse of power and its relationship with SPDC villagers have not dared to speak out against the USDA. Therefore, the situation in Mon State is getting worse because many are just looking at their self-interest and nobody is interested in community work.

News from page 3

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of the people. I recognize that this events is only for raising their own funds,” claimed by Nai Gyi (not real name), 57 year old man whose son was fined by the local police forces from Kwan Hla village.

Similarly people working in brothels in Moulmein are regularly arrested by the police and fleeced before being released.



Villagers in Mudon Township are being forced to grow castor-oil plants

Mudon Township, August, 2007

“In the area around Mudon Township, Lt. Colonel Than Swe, Division Commander, and leader of Light Military Battalion No. 62, has been forcing villagers to plant and grow castor-oil plants under the watch of his soldiers,” said a 35 year old who asked to remain anonymous.

The Village Peace and Development Councils (Ya Ya Ka in Burmese) ordered villages in Mudon Township to grow 3,000 castor-oil plants each. According to a Doe-Mar villager going by the pseudonym Nai Maung Yin, these villages are Naing-Hlone, Kyaik-Ywe, Taw-

Gu, Dha-Gon-Daing, Doe-Mar, Set-Twe, Kwan-Ka-Bwe, Hnee-Pa-Daw, Yaung-Daung and Kwan-Hlar.

“Before, we bought the castor-oil plant seeds ourselves and planted them. Now, we are forced to buy seedlings from the military and plant them in front of our houses, in our gardens and along our fences. We’ve already lost 7000 Kyat from buying seedlings,” said a Young-Down villager. The villagers are usually forced to grow the castor-oil plants repeatedly because, after being planted, the plants are not cared for and are often eaten by cows and buffalos.



Residents in Mudon Township are forced to buy seedlings from the authorities and plant them in front of their houses and along the motor ways in Mon State

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