

ENDURING HUNGER AND REPRESSION

Food Scarcity, Internal Displacement, and the Continued Use of Forced Labour in Toungoo District

Karen Human Rights Group
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Cover Photo: The ever increasing militarization of Toungoo District has caused many villagers to adopt a life of flight and uncertainty as internally displaced persons in the jungles where they hope to escape the constant demands and exploitation of the SPDC. The establishment of several new SPDC Army camps along the Toungoo to Mawchi car road in early 2003 lead to many villagers, such as this family from *xxxx* village in Tantabin Township, to abandon their homes and flee into the jungle where they must live nomadically, fleeing deeper into the jungle at the sound of any approaching SPDC Army columns hunting them. Many live in makeshift shelters such as that shown here and lose some of what few possessions they have every time that they are forced to flee again. [KHRG]

Rear Cover Photo: An internally displaced villager from Than Daung Township threshing newly harvested paddy in October 2002. The SPDC's continued crop destruction program has left many villagers with very little to eat. The SPDC believes that destroying the food supplies of the villagers still living in the hills will force them to move down out of the hills and into the relocation sites that the SPDC controls, in addition to cutting off what the SPDC believes to be the lines of supply of the Karen resistance. [KHRG]

The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) was founded in 1992 and documents the situation of villagers and townspeople in rural Burma through their direct testimonies, supported by photographic and other evidence. KHRG operates completely independently and is not affiliated with any political or other organization. Examples of our work can be seen on the World Wide Web at www.khrg.org, or printed copies may be obtained subject to approval and availability by sending a request to khrg@khrg.org.

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Preface

This report describes the current situation faced by rural Karen villagers in Toungoo District (known as Taw Oo in Karen). Toungoo District is the northernmost district of Karen State, sharing borders with Karenni (Kayah) State to the east, Pegu (Bago) Division to the west, and Shan State to the north. To the south Toungoo District shares borders with the Karen districts of Nyaunglebin (Kler Lweh Htoo) and Papun (Mutraw). The westernmost portion of the district bordering Pegu Division consists of the plains of the Sittaung River, which are heavily controlled by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) military junta which presently rules Burma. The rest of the district to the east is covered by steep and forested hills that are home to Karen villagers who live in small villages strewn across the hills. For years, the SPDC has endeavoured to extend its control through the hills, but their efforts thus far have been hampered by the continued armed resistance of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Within the areas that are strongly controlled by the SPDC, the villagers must live with constant demands for forced labour, food, and money from the SPDC battalions that are based in the area. Villages that do not comply with SPDC demands risk being relocated and burned. Many villages have been burned and their inhabitants forcibly relocated to sites where the SPDC may more easily control and exploit Those villagers who do not move to the relocation sites flee into the jungles where they live as internally displaced persons (IDPs). Several thousand villagers now live internally displaced in the mountains of Toungoo District. These villagers live in almost constant fear of SPDC Army units, and must run for their lives if they receive word that a column of soldiers is approaching. SPDC Army columns routinely shoot displaced villagers on sight. The villagers here continue to suffer severe human rights violations at the hands of the SPDC Army soldiers, including, but not limited to summary arrest, torture, forced labour, extortion, extrajudicial execution, and the systematic destruction of crops and food supplies.

Although a verbal ceasefire is in place between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the SPDC, not much has changed for the villagers in the district. KNLA and SPDC military units still occasionally clash. The SPDC has taken advantage of the ceasefire to move more troops into the area and to build new camps. These new camps and troops have meant that the villagers now have to do forced labour building the new camps and portering supplies up to the camps. There are also more troops and camps to demand

food and money from the villagers. The many new camps have made it more difficult for internally displaced villagers to work their fields or to go to find food.

This report is based on numerous field reports and a total of 329 separate interviews gathered between October 2000 and July 2004, of which 197 have been directly quoted throughout this report. The direct testimony of villagers living within Toungoo District has been supplemented in the report by interviews with Karen relief workers who have first-hand knowledge of the region. KHRG field researchers conducted interviews with villagers living within the SPDC-controlled areas, relocation sites, hill villages, and also with IDPs living in hiding in the jungles. These testimonies are supported by additional evidence in the form of photographs and SPDC order documents issued to villages, incident reports, maps, and field reports compiled by KHRG field researchers. Over 1,500 pages of testimony were recorded and reviewed for this analysis of the present situation in Toungoo District.

This report has been divided into several parts for ease of reading and clarification; it begins with this Preface and is then followed by an Introduction and **Executive Summary**. The analysis is then broken down into topics under the main sections of The Military Situation, 'Nyein Chan Yay' Villages, 'Ywa Bone' Villages, Landmines, Food Security, and The Future of the Area. Within these sections the villagers tell much of the story through direct quotes from their testimonies. At the end of the report are several appendices: a list of the 197 interviewees whose testimonies are quoted throughout this report, a list of SPDC Army units operating in Toungoo District from 2000 to 2004, additional Englishlanguage translations of SPDC order documents issued to villages in Toungoo District not included in the body of the report, and finally censored copies of the original Burmese-language SPDC order documents that have been reproduced throughout this report. The full text of the interviews and field reports, upon which this report is based is available as a separately published Annex which is available from KHRG upon approved request.

Additional background information on the situation within Toungoo District may be found in "False Peace; Increasing SPDC Military Repression in Toungoo District of Northern Karen State" (KHRG #99-02, 25/3/1999), "Peace Villages and Hiding

Villages; Roads, Relocations, and the Campaign for Control in Toungoo District" (KHRG #2000-05, 15/10/2000), KHRG Information Update #2002-U1: Toungoo District (KHRG #2002-U1, 30/1/02), and "Expansion of the Guerrilla Retaliation Units and Food Shortages in Toungoo District of Northern Karen State" (KHRG #2003-U1, 16/6/ 2003). Further detailed information regarding the Dam Byan Byaut Kya may be seen in the abovementioned reports as well as in "Death Squads and Displacement; Systematic Executions, Village Destruction, and the Flight of Villagers in Nyaunglebin District" (KHRG #99-04, 24/5/99). Additional photographs related to the situation described in this report can be viewed in KHRG Photo Set 2000-B (KHRG #2000-P2, 18/10/ 2000), KHRG Photo Set 2001-A (KHRG #2001-P1, 14/9/01), and KHRG Photo Set 2002-A (KHRG #2002-P1, 19/12/2002). These reports are all available on the KHRG website (www.khrg.org).

Notes on the Text

In this report, all names of those interviewed have been changed and some details may have been omitted where necessary to protect people from retaliation. Pseudonyms are shown in double quotes; all other names throughout this report are real. The captions following each quotation in this report include the interviewee's (changed) name, gender, age, village and township, and a reference to the interview or field report from which the quote was taken. These reference numbers may be used to find the full text of the interview or field report in the interview annex.

The text often refers to villages, village tracts, and townships. The SPDC has local administration called Peace and Development Councils, at the village, village tract, township, and state/division levels. A village tract is a group of 5-25 villages centered on a large village; for example, Kler Lah village tract. A township is a much larger area administered from a central town. The Karen National Union (KNU) divides Toungoo District into two townships: Than Daung in the north, and Tantabin in the south. The official SPDC village tracts and townships do not correspond to the Karen village tracts and townships; for example, under the SPDC system, all of Toungoo District is essentially comprised of only one township, known as Than Daung township. Throughout this report, the village tracts and townships as defined by the Karen have been used as these are the ones referred to by the villagers.

In Toungoo District, most villages and towns have both a Karen and a Burmese name, and both appear throughout this report depending on which are used by the villagers. Some examples are shown below. In this report, Than Daung Gyi is used to distinguish it (the Than Daung found on most maps) from New Than Daung (a.k.a. Than Daung Myothit), which is where the township offices are located.

Burmese	Karen
Toungoo	Taw Oo
Tantabin	Taw Ta Tu
Than Daung	Daw Pa Ko
Baw Ga Li Gyi	Kler Lah
Baw Ga Li Lay	Wah Tho Ko
Yay Dta Gone	Klaw Mi Der
Yay Tho Gyi	Kaw Thay Der
Yay Tho Lay	Klay Soe Kee
Maw Ni Dtine Gyi	Naw Soe
Thit Si Daung	Kaw So Ko

In the interviews, the villagers will often refer to 'loh ah pay'; which is literally the traditional Burmese form of voluntary labour performed for the community. The SPDC uses this term in most cases of forced labour. and has become known to the villagers to refer to most forms of forced labour with the exception of long-term portering. Villagers now say that even this form of portering is called 'loh ah pay' by the SPDC. 'Set tha' means forced labour as messengers at SPDC Army camps. Other Karen, Burmese, and Pali terms may be found in the list of 'Terms and Abbreviations' which follows. Villagers often refer to the KNU/KNLA as 'Kaw Thoo Lei' (the name of the Karen homeland), and SPDC troops and officials as 'the Burmese' or 'the enemy' (the latter being a habit that they have picked up from the local KNLA). SPDC officers often accuse villagers of being 'Nga Pway' ('ringworm'); this is derogatory SPDC slang for KNLA soldiers. Villagers in the hills commonly do not keep track of dates and ages, and as a result different people give different dates for an event or different ages for the people involved. Wherever possible, KHRG has endeavoured to establish and indicate the most accurate dates and ages. Villagers sometimes mention 'last year'; this often refers to the period of time before the latest (June – October) wet season, rather than the previous calendar year, as well as using 'yesterday' to mean any time in the recent past. All numeric dates shown throughout this report are given in dd/mm/yy format.

Terms and Abbreviations

Military/ Political

SPDC State Peace & Development Council; military junta ruling Burma
PDC Peace & Development Council; SPDC local-level administration

VPDC
 Village Peace & Development Council (abbreviated 'Ya Ya Ka' in Burmese)
 TPDC
 Township Peace & Development Council (abbreviated 'Ma Ya Ka' in Burmese)
 SLORC
 State Law and Order Restoration Council; former name of the SPDC until Nov. 1997

IBInfantry Battalion (SPDC), usually about 250-500 soldiers fighting strengthLIBLight Infantry Battalion (SPDC), usually about 250-500 soldiers fighting strengthLIDLight Infantry Division (SPDC), ten battalions, usually for offensive operationsTOCTactical Operations Command (SPDC), 3 battalions, for offensive operations

SOC Strategic Operations Command (SPDC), 3-4 battalions, for local defensive operations

CompanyMilitary unit of about 100 soldiers, though often under-strength in SPDC Army
Column
Combination of companies, assembled for operations; usually 100-300 soldiers

Section Basic military unit of 10-11 soldiers

Camp Army base or outpost; from remote hill posts of 10 soldiers to Battalion HQ camps of

several hundred soldiers

Bo Literally 'lieutenant', but also used to refer to all officers

NCO Non-commissioned officers; lance corporals, corporals, and sergeants

KNU Karen National Union; main Karen opposition group KNLA Karen National Liberation Army; armed wing of the KNU

DKBA Democratic Karen Buddhist Army; Karen group allied with the SPDC

KNPP Karenni National People's Party; Karenni opposition group

KnSO Karenni Solidarity Organisation; Karenni group allied with the SPDC

Baw Bi Doh 'Short Pants', name used by villagers for the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* ('Guerrilla Retaliation')

units

Nga Pway 'Ringworm'; derogatory SPDC slang for KNU/KNLA

Kawthoolei Karen name for their homeland, also often used to refer to the KNU/KNLA

Village Terms

IDP Internally Displaced Person; villagers who have become internal refugees

loh ah payVoluntary labour to make merit, but commonly used by SPDC for most forms of forced

labour

set tha 'Messenger'; forced labour as errand-runners, messengers, and for some odd jobs wontan 'Servant', used by SPDC officers to denote forced labourers, usually porters

paddy Rice grain still in the husk

rice Rice grain after pounding or milling, with the husk removed and ready to cook

Measurements and Currency

Viss Unit of weight measure; one viss is 1.6 kilograms or 3.5 pounds

Kyat Tha 16 grams; 100 kyat tha equals 1 viss

Pyi Volume of uncooked rice equal to 8 small condensed milk tins; about 2 kg / 4.4 lb

Bowl Volume of uncooked rice same as a *pyi*

Tin Also 'big tin'; volume of rice or paddy of 8 pyi; about 17 kg / 37 lb of husked rice Volume of rice or paddy equal to 2 big tins; 25 kg or 55 lb if rice, less if paddy

Taun Burmese unit of measurement equalling ½ metre or 1.5 feet (one cubit; elbow to fingertip)

Twa Burmese unit of measurement equalling 9 inches or 23 cm (one handspan)

Kyat Burmese currency; US\$1 = 6 Kyat at official rate, approximately 1,000 Kyat at current

market rate

Baht Thai currency; at the time of printing US\$1 = approximately 40 Baht

Honorifics

Saw Sgaw Karen prefix for men
Naw Sgaw Karen prefix for women

Pa 'Father'; Karen suffix attached to names to indicate someone's father, also used as a

male personal prefix

Mo 'Mother'; Karen suffix attached to names to indicate someone's mother

Pati 'Uncle'; Karen term of respect for male elders of middle age

Mugha 'Aunt'; Karen term of respect for female elders of middle age

Pu 'Grandfather'; Karen personal prefix used for elderly men

Grandmother'; Karen personal prefix used for elderly women

Thra 'Teacher'; Karen term used for any teacher, pastor, senior, or respected person

U Burmese honorific prefix for older or respected men

Ko/ Maung Burmese honorific prefix for younger men

Daw Burmese honorific prefix for married women or older women

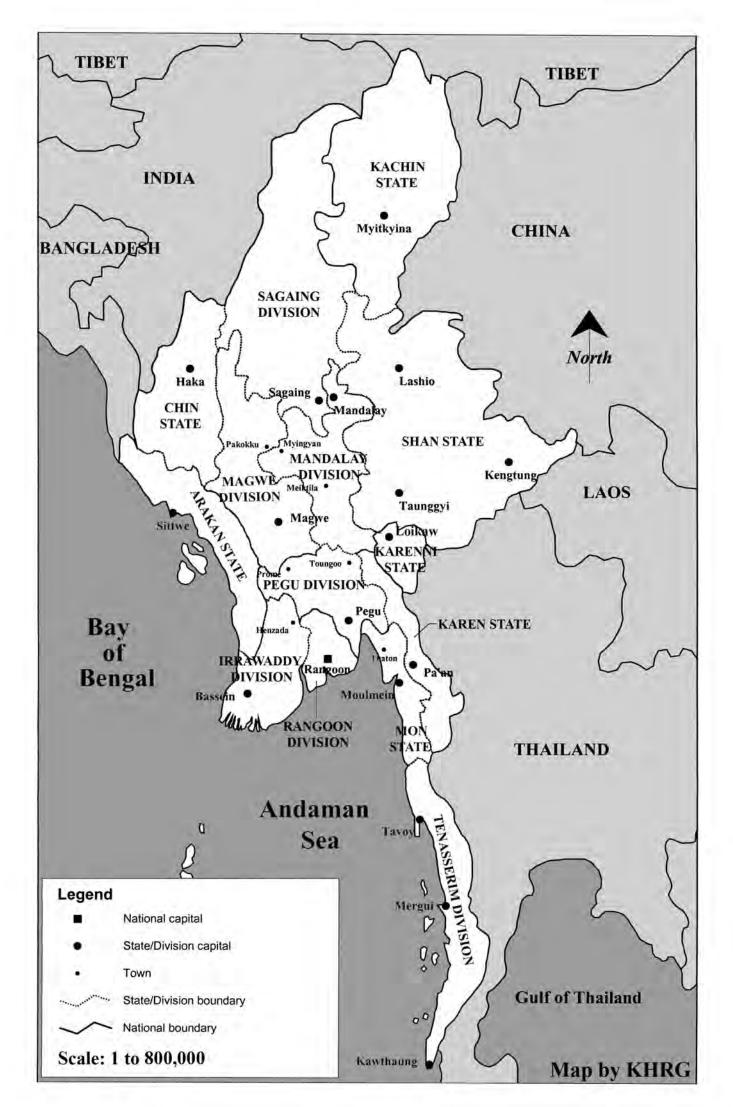
Ma Burmese honorific prefix for young women

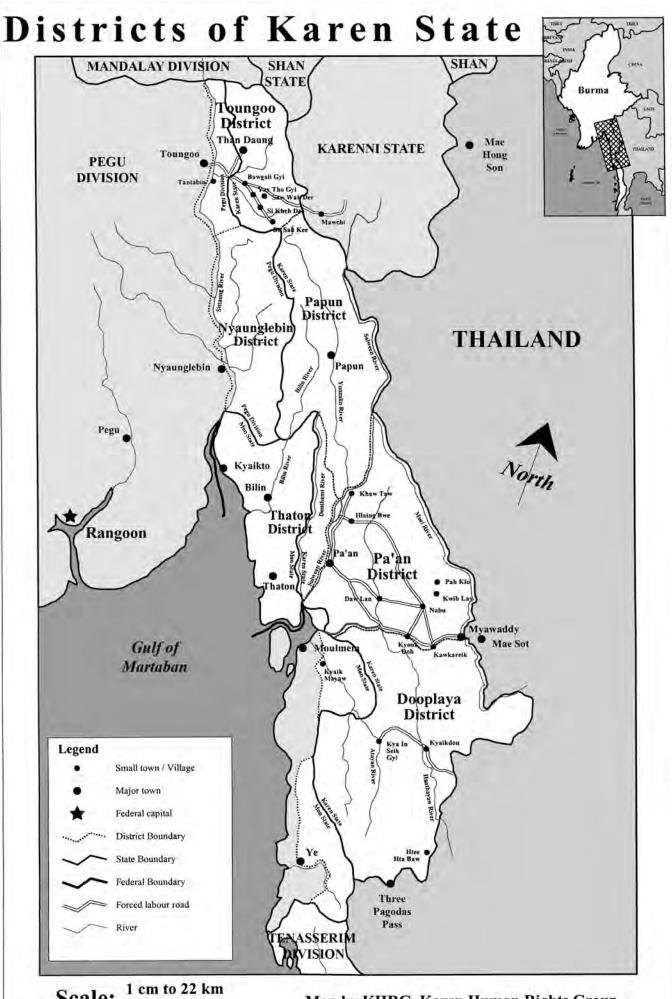
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
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Scale: 1 in. to 35 miles

Map by KHRG, Karen Human Rights Group



I. Introduction and Executive Summary

Toungoo District (known as Taw Oo in Karen) is the most northern of the seven Karen districts. It shares borders with Mandalay Division and Shan State to the north, Karenni State to the east, Pegu Division to the west, and Papun and Nyaunglebin Districts of Karen State to the south [see Map 2 of Karen State]. The westernmost stretches of the district lie within the fertile Sittaung River basin which gives way to the hills known to the Karen as the Ka Ser Lu Mountains in the east. These rugged and heavily forested mountains cover the vast majority of the eastern portion of the district. The district is divided into two administrative zones: Than Daung township and Tantabin township. The boundary between the two townships roughly follows the route of the Toungoo to Mawchi motor road. The area to the north of this road is Than Daung township, while the area to the south is Tantabin township [see Map 3 of Toungoo District]. Most of the inhabitants of Toungoo District are Karen, who traditionally live in small remote villages scattered over the steep hills.

The State Peace and Development Council's (SPDC) attempts to gain complete control over the district have effectively divided the district into those villages which they have brought under their control, and those villages which the SPDC are not able to effectively control. The SPDC has dubbed the villages under its control as *Nyein Chan Yay* ('Peace') villages. The *Nyein Chan Yay* villagers must face regular demands for forced labour, building materials, extortion money, food and intelligence from SPDC military units and officials. Some of these *Nyein Chan Yay* villages are forced relocation sites where villagers are used as a ready pool of forced labour.

Villagers living outside SPDC control are known as *Ywa Bone* ('Hiding') villagers. The SPDC considers these villagers to be aiding the resistance. Therefore it believes that to undermine the Karen National Union (KNU), it must carry out a war of attrition against the villagers. The villagers are hunted down and often shot on sight by SPDC Army columns. Their houses are burned down and their fields destroyed in an attempt to get them to come down and stay in SPDC-controlled villages.

The SPDC's control is the strongest in the plains in the western part of the district. SPDC control is so strong that the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed wing of the KNU, does not often venture into the area. Most of the activity of the KNU/ KNLA is limited to the hills in the east. In order to extend its control into the mountains, the SPDC has been gradually increasing its presence by

progressively establishing more camps farther afield in increasingly more remote locations. SPDC Army camps now dot the hills and patrols criss-cross the area, making few places free of their influence.

The SPDC's Dam Byan Byaut Kya ('Guerrilla Retaliation Units') still operate in the district. A number of new Dam Byan Byaut Kya units have emerged and are now active in several areas that they were not previously operating in. The units do not appear to be killing as much as they once were, nor using the same brutal methods in which to do so. They seem to be more preoccupied with forcing the villagers to perform labour for them as well as demanding both food and money like the regular battalions. It appears that each of the battalions under the Southern Command based within the district have now formed its own Guerrilla Retaliation Unit. There are presently ten battalions from Southern Command and several more from the Western Command active in Toungoo District. There are also as many as seven separate Guerrilla Retaliation Units active in Toungoo District.

The use of forced labour continues in the district despite SPDC pledges to put a stop to it. Villagers are ordered to carry rations and munitions to Army camps, particularly in the wet season when the demands for villagers increase because the roads have become impassable to vehicles. Many villagers are forced once a month to either go and porter, or hire itinerant labourers to go in their place. In some areas, the cost of hiring labourers has become so high that many villagers, already destitute, simply can no longer afford to do so. They then have no option other than to go and porter after all. The villagers are then unable to tend their own fields and plantations, leaving them with no source of income to pay forced labour fees or to buy extra rice, and driving many to the point of starvation. The forced labour fees, in addition to the full gamut of other fees and taxes extorted from the villagers, has further impoverished many villagers. The desire to avoid portering is not purely an economic one. The villagers are typically treated very poorly by the soldiers while portering, many of them are severely beaten when they cannot keep up, or collapse under heavy loads of up to 30 viss (49 kgs. / 108 lbs.). The danger of losing a leg or their lives to a landmine is also a concern very high in villagers' minds.

SPDC soldiers regularly force villagers to walk ahead of them as human minesweepers so that they will detonate any landmines which may have been planted there. In some instances when villagers are ordered to carry supplies along the Bu Sah Kee or Mawchi roads, the soldiers do not accompany the porters as they carry their loads out of fear of the many landmines which have been laid in the region. Both the SPDC and the KNLA continue to lay landmines, but it is the villagers who suffer the most from their use. In many areas across the district the SPDC has planted landmines deliberately targeting civilians. KHRG has received numerous accounts from villagers, stating that the SPDC has planted mines in their plantations, on the paths that they use when going to buy food, even in the villages themselves after the villagers have fled in advance of an approaching SPDC column.

Food security has become a serious problem for almost all villagers in the hills. For those in the SPDC controlled areas, the forced labour and travel restrictions imposed upon them deny them enough time to go to their hill fields and plantations, leaving them short of food. The time granted to many villagers is often too short for them to be able to properly cultivate their fields. Some villagers are not even allowed to go to their fields. Regular demands for extortion money and forced labour fees rob them of any extra money with which to buy food. When villagers do have money to buy rice, the SPDC limits the amount that they are allowed to buy. For those living in hiding in the jungle, simply working their fields can be very dangerous as they are easy targets in their open hillside fields. The SPDC targets internally displaced villagers during the harvest season when they are far more visible in their fields. Having to constantly be on the run, needing to flee at a moment's notice also makes it extremely difficult for them to tend to a field. In order to get any food they must resort to planting small cash crops which they must carry to Nyein Chan Yay villages and sell in

exchange for rice. By destroying their crops and shooting villagers in their fields, the SPDC is trying to starve the villagers out of the hills. Almost all of the 329 villagers interviewed for this report, whether they were in hiding in the forest or in SPDC controlled villages, stated that they did not have enough food.

To further consolidate its control over the region, the SPDC has continued to push motor roads farther into the hills. The Kler Lah to Mawchi road, which the SPDC began constructing in 1999, has now been finished. The consequences of the completion of this road will likely mirror what happened further south after work was finished on the Bu Sah Kee car road. It will create an even greater military presence in the area due to the increased access provided by the road and the many new SPDC military camps that have been built along the road. The road will also make it much more difficult for villagers in Than Daung township to receive outside aid. The road, though completed, will need to be maintained and repaired each year after the rains cease and forced labour will undoubtedly be the means by which this will be carried out. The camps will need to be supplied, and it will again be the villagers who will have to porter the supplies.

Most of the villagers interviewed by KHRG have stated that they simply wish to be left alone in peace to tend their fields and raise their families. The Karen struggle, now in its 55th year, has left most villagers exhausted. All but the oldest of villagers have seen nothing but war. For most villagers there are only two choices; remain in SPDC controlled areas where they must perform forced labour and comply with whatever demands are issued, or flee into the jungle where they must eke out an existence homeless, hungry, and hunted.

An internally displaced family from Than Daung township inside their small hut in the forest after they were forced to flee when SPDC soldiers entered their village. [KHRG]



II. The Military Situation

"In 2000, a landmine exploded in yyyy village so they [SPDC] arrested three xxxx villagers and tortured them. They accused those three people of helping the Nga Pway ['Ringworm'; derogatory SPDC slang for the KNU] by letting them sleep in their houses. It was not true, but they didn't listen to what they were saying to them. They didn't believe them, so they tortured them and poked them [with the barrels of their rifles], and hit them. They hit and tortured those people on the 29th of June 2000. They [the soldiers] were from IB #124. They released those people the next morning. When they released those three people, they said 'You have to find two guns for us, but if you cannot find them, you have to come back to me. If you come back to me [without the weapons] I will do what I want to you'. They were the guns of IB #124. After the landmine exploded, the KNU came and took the guns. They [the SPDC soldiers] were afraid that they would get a bad name, so they tortured the villagers and forced the villagers to find them for them. We couldn't find the two guns." - "Saw Pee Bee" (M, 35), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #191, 11/02)

The SPDC has divided the district into three different categories: the areas under SPDC control (the 'White' areas), the disputed areas where there is some KNLA guerrilla activity (the 'Brown' areas), and areas controlled by the KNU (the 'Black' areas). Until the mid-1990's large areas of Toungoo District were held by the KNU, but now very few 'Black' areas remain. Those areas considered by the SPDC to be 'White' areas are: the plains in the west of the district, Kler Lah and the villages surrounding it, Klaw Mi Der and the villages near it, Than Daung Gyi and the villages around it, and the area to the west of the Day Loh River in Than Daung township [see Map 3]. In recent years KNLA units can and have conducted guerrilla operations in all these areas, with the exception of the plains, making 'white area' a misnomer. Most of the district would more accurately be defined as disputed 'Brown' areas. The only areas that the SPDC can effectively control are the western plains of the Sittaung River basin.

Successive Burmese regimes have made undermining the resistance groups by attacking their civilian populations, a central component of their counter-insurgency strategy. This has become known as the 'Four Cuts', which are to cut food, cut finances, cut intelligence and cut recruits. To this end many of the military operations conducted in Toungoo District have aimed more at harassing the civilians until they become so impoverished and starved that they have to come down out of the mountains. Without the civilians, the SPDC reasons, the KNU will have to give up.

There have not been any major operations in Toungoo District since 1995-96 when the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) attempted to drive all of the villagers out of the hills of Tantabin township and into the SLORC-controlled relocation sites where they could be closely controlled and

exploited by the military. SPDC Army battalions now based in the area routinely mount sweeps through the hills in an effort to flush those still living in hiding there into SPDC controlled areas in an ongoing effort to secure absolute control over the region. This control has steadily increased as the SPDC pushes through more roads, constructs more camps and brings in more troops. Many of the new military camps have been built in areas where there were previously none. Some of these camps are in areas which have traditionally been KNU strongholds. The new camps have made it possible for SPDC patrols based out of them to reach most areas of the district.

In December 2003, the SPDC began moving units of Light Infantry Division (LID) #55 into the district to support a relocation campaign and offensive in southern Karenni State. Meanwhile a 'gentleman's ceasefire' was reached between the SPDC and the KNU in talks in Rangoon in January 2004. The KNU and the SPDC verbally agreed that their troops would stop shooting at each other, but no restrictions were made about the movement of troops and supplies or the construction of Army camps or roads. Despite the ceasefire, KNLA and SPDC troops clashed on an almost daily basis throughout December 2003 and January 2004. By the end of January the offensive had ended, but the SPDC took advantage of the ceasefire and continued to move more troops into the area, stock its camps, build new camps and repair the Toungoo-Mawchi road and the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road. Engagements have continued to occur, although at a reduced level, right up to the time this report was printed.

The SPDC

"The SPDC government does not want to find their enemies, they want to make problems for the civilians so that we starve. We have to suffer. They torture us and destroy the villagers' belongings. They even take our things when we travel. They fight with the civilians, they don't fight with their enemies. The SPDC are not good people. When they arrest us they hit us and torture us." - "Saw A'La Chit" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #188, 11/02)

Toungoo District is within the area of operations of the Southern Regional Command (abbreviated in Burmese as 'Ta Pa Ka') which has its headquarters at Toungoo. The Southern Regional Command maintains two Strategic Operations Commands (SOC) in the area with their headquarters at Kler Lah and Bu Sah Kee. Each of the two SOC's are responsible for an area and deploy their soldiers at camps along the roads and dotted among the hills. From the camps the soldiers patrol the surrounding area. The Western Regional Command ('Na Pa Ka'), headquartered at Sittwe in Arakan (Rakhine) State, has also stationed at least one SOC in Than Daung

township since the late-1990's. The Southern Command battalions generally operate in Tantabin township, while those from Western Command operate in Than Daung township. At any one time there are between ten to fifteen battalions from both regional commands operating in the district. Most battalions typically rotate in and out of the region every three to four months, except for IB #124 and IB #73 which have their battalion base camps in the district.

The Southern Regional Command battalions that were operating in Toungoo

District as of July 2004 were Infantry Battalions (IB) #26, #53 #60, #73, #75, #92, #124, #264 and Light Infantry Battalions (LIB) #439 and #589. Other battalions of the Southern Command which have rotated in and out of the district during the period in which the interviews for this report were collected are IB #30, #39, #48, #57, #59, and #234. Western Regional Command has also stationed IB #20, #34, #232, #263, and LIB #344, #354, #535, #538, #539, #540, and #550 in Toungoo District at different times. At present it is unclear which of these battalions are currently posted to Toungoo District. The regular rotations of the different battalions make it difficult to

say which battalions are in the area at any one time. The only units which do not appear to follow this system of rotation are IB #124, whose battalion base camp is at Bayinnaung Army camp near Than Daung and IB #73 based near New Than Daung.

Occasionally, other military formations are brought into the district to conduct specific operations. In December 2003, Tactical Operations Command (TOC) #552 of LID #55 began operating in the eastern portion of the district, especially along the Toungoo-Mawchi road. This TOC was brought in to secure the area as a part of the SPDC's offensive



SPDC troops from IB #26 and IB #48 can clearly be seen riding in the back of this villager's car that was comandeered to carry rice from Naw Soe to Bu Sah Kee [KHRG]

and relocation campaign in southern Karenni State in December 2003 and January 2004. The units of LID #55 reported to be operating in Toungoo District at the time were IB #94, and LIB #508, #511 and #117. LID #55 withdrew from the area by April 2004.

"The SPDC military units which stay there [in Toungoo District] are IB #39, IB #48, #26, #73, #124, #75 and IB #30. There are some other troops that have come in there but I don't know about that. They are patrolling like the guerrilla troops." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

The SPDC has spent a lot of time building an increasing number of Army camps throughout the district. There are now camps all along the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road and the Kler Lah-Mawchi road. These heavily fortified camps form a barrier to the movement of internally displaced villagers as well as the KNU/KNLA. They also provide bases from which SPDC columns can patrol the surrounding areas for internally displaced villagers and to destroy

their food supplies. In addition, new camps have been set up in the hills of central Than Daung township. From these camps the SPDC has spread its influence over an area which it previously only had tenuous control over.

The Dam Byan Byaut Kya

"There is nothing different between the different guerrilla groups; when they come into a village, they hit and torture people and they kill people. When they come into the village, people cannot look at their faces. If someone were to look at their faces, they would grab them by the hair and slap them in the face. Sometimes there are twenty soldiers in a group, and sometimes they patrol with only four or five soldiers in the group. Some groups have as many as thirty soldiers." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

The Dam Byan Byaut Kya ('Guerrilla Retaliation' Units) first emerged in the plains of Nyaunglebin District in September 1998 and later expanded northwards into southern Tantabin township at the beginning of 1999. Their structure is unlike the regular SPDC Army battalions in as much as they operate in small sections of five to ten men, typically travelling at night, not along the trails but through the forest itself. They carry non-standard weapons such as AK-47 and AR-15 assault rifles which are better suited to jungle warfare than the SPDC Army's standard-issue G3. They do not wear a uniform like the regular soldiers, but a combination of military fatigues and civilian clothing. Many of them wear military shirts along with a pair of short pants, giving rise to the name by which many villagers refer to them by: the Baw Bi Doh ('Short Pants'). Soldiers selected to become members of the Dam Byan Byaut Kya are reportedly chosen for their propensity for cruelty [for more on the Dam Byan Byaut Kya see "Death Squads and Displacement: Systematic Executions, Village Destruction and the Flight of Villagers in Nyaunglebin District" (KHRG#99-04, 14/5/99), "Peace Villages and Hiding Villages: Roads, Relocations, and the Campaign for Control in Toungoo District" (KHRG#2000-05, 15/ 10/00), "Flight, Hunger, and Survival: Repression and Displacement in the Villages of Papun and Nyaunglebin Districts" (KHRG#2001-03, 22/10/01), and "Information Update: Toungoo District" (KHRG#2002-U1, 30/1/02)].

As their name implies, the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* dispense their own special brand of 'retaliation' on anyone who they perceive as helping the resistance. For the first few years of their existence they moved from village to village seeking out villagers who they suspected of having past or present contact with the

resistance. Upon arriving at a village, they appeared to already know exactly who they were looking for, giving the impression that they had a list of names of their intended victims. The villagers were then taken from their homes into the jungle where they were brutally executed. Although they carried rifles, they showed a preference for killing their victims with knives, often beheading or mutilating the bodies. These executions took place for contacts that could have taken place a decade prior to the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* coming for the villager. Offences as slight as portering a load, or acting as a guide for the KNLA, voluntarily or otherwise, could result in a brutal death at the hands of the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya*.

In recent years there has been a decrease in the numbers of deaths attributed to the Dam Byan Byaut Kya. When they have killed people, incidents of mutilating or beheading their victims have also become far less common. Now they act much like the regular SPDC Army battalions in as much as they seem to be more content with extorting food, money and forced labour from the villagers. Perhaps they are acting under orders from Rangoon to tone down their activities so that the international community does not learn of their existence, or they have simply depleted their lists of intended targets. They still continue to patrol through the jungle and arrive unexpectedly at villages. This combined with the reputation that they built up in 1998 and 1999 makes villagers fear their arrival more than any other unit operating in the district. This is likely a large part of their reason for being; their brutal methods coupled with the shroud of secrecy surrounding them instils fear in the minds of the villagers. The result is that many villagers are too afraid to help the KNU, lest one of the Dam Byan Byaut Kya units learns of it and comes looking for them to deliver their retribution.

"During the year [2002], we haven't heard that they have killed anyone west of the Day Loh River in the Than Daung Gyi area, but last year in 2001 they killed a teacher. They haven't killed anyone this year, but they have never stopped using forced labour and torture." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG field researcher (Interview #3, 8/02)

"In 1999, the Southern Regional Command's Dam Byan Byaut Kya [Guerrilla Retaliation] Unit was organized by the Deputy Regional Command Commander, Thra Maung Ni, in Zayatkyi village tract along with 180 men [from regular Burma Army battalions]. They accused the villagers of carrying weapons in the jungle [of being KNLA]. In the area where the Byaut Kya ['Guerrillas'] were operating, they caused the deaths of 106 innocent villagers. The lives of these villagers were lost due to the orders from the Deputy [Southern] Regional Command Commander, Thra Maung Ni." - Field report from an anonymous Karen villager, Than Daung township (FR3, 8/00)

To:

The Dam Byan Byaut Kya have tended to confine their operations in the past to areas which have already been largely pacified by the regular SPDC battalions, such as the western plains of the Sittaung River basin where they made their debut in Toungoo District in early 1999. Their assignment appears to be

more of a final blow to crush the civilian support of the opposition after the regular battalions have removed the threat of the KNLA. While regular SPDC battalions do not often actively seek out the KNLA in Toungoo District, they do at times clash with them, but the Dam Byan Byaut Kya almost exclusively go after the villagers. KHRG has not received any information regarding instances of the Dam Byan Byaut Kya ever seeking out the KNLA in Toungoo District. The KNLA, however, has been able to ambush Dam Byan Byaut Kya groups. The Dam Byan Byaut Kya have told villagers on numerous occasions that they will kill five villagers for every one of them killed by the KNLA. Using tactics similar to those employed by the regular SPDC Army battalions, the Dam Byan Byaut Kya have staged retaliatory attacks against the civilians after one of the 'guerrillas' has been wounded or killed by the

KNLA, regardless of whether the villagers were complicit in the attack or not. The Dam Byan Byaut Kya have expanded their area of operations in the past few years and now operate well into the hills. They currently operate in and around Kler Lah, in the Bu Sah Kee-Saw Mu Der area, and in the Maw Nay Pwa region stretching from Klaw Mi Der to Play Hsa Loh in Tantabin township, and around Than Daung Gyi, and in the area to the west of the Day Loh River in Than Daung township [see Map 3]. The expansion of the Dam Byan Byaut Kya into the hills may mean that they have already depleted their lists of names from the plains and now plan on doing the same in the hills.

"During this year [2001], the Sa Thon Lon [Guerrilla Retaliation Unit] came up to Bu Sah Kee. They arrived in Bu Sah Kee; they arrived in Pway Baw Der, Si Daw Ko, and Saw Mu Der. They came up and were active in that area. ... This year they have been more active. They were also active last year. Mostly they have been active in

> Ler Kla Der, Mwee 01)

"I am really afraid of them [Guerrilla Retaliation Unit]. Every civilian is afraid of them, even

Loh. Khaw Moe Loh, Plaw Baw Der, Play Hsa Loh. and Kheh Der." -"Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/

the children. They said that if one of them were to die by a bullet or a landmine, they would kill five villagers." - "Saw Khaw" (M, 45), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township

Each Dam Byan Byaut Kya unit assumes an ominous sounding name, possibly to further frighten the villagers. The various units now known to be currently active in Toungoo District go by the names Moe Kyo ('Lightning'), Mone Daing ('Storm'), Galone ('Garuda'), Mone Thon ('Monsoon'), Wei Za ('Supernatural Being'), Ba La ('Strength'), and Kya Gyi ('Big Tiger'). Two of these groups, Wei Za and Ba La were only first reported by KHRG in June 2003 [see "Expansion of the Guerrilla Retaliation Units and Food Shortages in Toungoo District of Northern Karen State" (KHRG#2003-U1, 16/6/03)]. The Kya Gyi Guerrilla Retaliation Unit is another

20-4-2002

Chairperson and members, as soon as [you] receive this letter now, help and send 1 viss [1.6 kgs. / 3.6 lbs.] of chicken/ duck for curry as convenient with the person who comes to give the letter, asking for help.

Carry it out immediately with the person who comes to give the letter.

Order #1: A translation of an order which was issued by one of

[Sd.] Saw aaaa Area Mobile Duty In-charge Guerrilla Unit

the Guerrilla Retaliation Units. [A copy of the original Burmeselanguage order may be viewed as Order #1 in Appendix D.]

(Interview #35 1/02)

previously unreported unit. Which of these units are companies and which of them are sections within those companies is not clear. The men selected to join the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* are mostly NCOs (Corporals and Sergeants) who are noted for being particularly brutal. According to one KHRG researcher, those who are selected are promoted to the next rank level after completing special training. Many of the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* soldiers also adopt pseudonyms. These are usually menacing sounding so as to further frighten the villagers. Some of the commanding officers have taken the same name as the unit itself. For example, the commanding officer of the *Moe Kyo* ('Lightning') Guerrilla Retaliation Unit is Bo Moe Kyo.

"They choose the cruellest people from each battalion who dare to kill the villagers and give extra training to them. When they have finished their training, they increase the rank of these people. For example, if one of them was a Sergeant, they promote him to be an officer. They [SPDC] allow the Dam Byan Byaut Kya to do whatever they want."- "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

"I don't know the name of the Commander [of the Wei Za Guerrilla Retaliation Unit], but I know one of their officers. They call him [Lieutenant] Khin Soe when he is staying in the camp, but when he is out on patrol they call him Lieutenant Ma Na ['conceit' or 'arrogance']." - "Saw Ghay Hser" (M, 52), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #70, 7/02)

"The names of the commanders are not their real names. If the group's name is Ba La, then the commander's name will also be Ba La, and if the group's name is Moe Kyo, then the commander will assume the name Moe Kyo." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

As originally created, the Dam Byan Byaut Kya took their orders directly from the Southern Command commander and Military Intelligence Battalion #3 based in Toungoo [see "Death Squads and Displacement: Systematic Executions, Village Destruction, and the Flight of Villagers in Nyaunglebin District" (KHRG#99-04, 24/5/99)]. Whenever villagers complained to the regular Army units about the Dam Byan Byaut Kya, the soldiers would reply that they could not do anything because they did not have any authority over them. The Dam Byan Byaut Kya units and the regular battalions avoided each other and some villagers even reported a degree of enmity and fear on the part of the regular soldiers toward them. This, however, seems to have changed somewhat with the regular battalions and the Guerrilla Retaliation Units now operating more closely. At least some of the Dam Byan Byaut Kya

units appear to take their orders from the regular battalions. This may make them more accountable to the Army, but more likely provides each battalion with a unit to use to do their dirty work.

"They demand food and hit people. They do whatever they want to do. They will even do things to the [SPDC] Army or the government people. They do what ever they want to do. The government set up a nurse [in a clinic], but they [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] accused her and said that she was going to give medicine to the outside people [KNU]. They hit her; she couldn't do anything." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG field researcher (Interview #3, 8/02)

"The Sa Thon Lon [Guerrilla Retaliation Unit] doesn't need to ask anything anymore. Whenever they see any of the villagers, they can shoot them all dead. It is what 'Sa Thon Lon' means. They [SPDC] give them full power. They can kill, they can rape the women, and they can burn the villages. The Army who lives in the camp can't say anything to them, because their group receives their authority from Rangoon." - "Saw Bee Thaw" (M, 30), KHRG field researcher (Interview #2, 2/01)

"I have heard that Khin Nyunt gave the authority to this group [Guerrilla Retaliation Unit] himself." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

"We can't complain to them; they said that if we want to complain about them, then we have to complain to [General] Khin Nyunt and [Senior General] Than Shwe. They are controlled from the top by Khin Nyunt or someone else there. The other [regular] troops can't control them. If you complained to the local commanders nobody could take action; they are not controlled from there." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

Although the Moe Kyo, Mone Daing, Galone, and Mone Thon units have been operating for several years now, originally in Nyaunglebin District, it now appears that each battalion in the Southern Command has been given the power to create its own unit within the battalion. According to a KHRG field researcher, each battalion based in the area under the control of the Southern Regional Command has formed its own Dam Byan Byaut Kya unit. The Wei Za unit was formed as a Dam Byan Byaut Kya unit within IB #124 based at Bayinnaung Army camp near Than Daung Gyi. The Ba La Guerrilla Retaliation Unit also seems to have been formed directly by a battalion. A Column Commander from the Wei Za Guerrilla Retaliation Unit, Captain Cheh Tee, for instance, takes his orders from Battalion Commander Kyaw Zaw Han of IB #124. The *Wei Za* Guerrilla Retaliation Unit has as many as forty soldiers, who then separate into eight to ten sections of four or five men each whenever they are out on patrol. It appears that the *Wei Za* unit may be a company within IB #124. KHRG has yet to receive any information that any of the battalions from Western Regional Command in Than Daung township having formed their own *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* units.

"In the past they used to have it so that five battalions would send a total of 60 people to make one guerrilla group. For example, IB #39, IB #26, IB #73, IB #48, and IB #30 would each have to choose a total of 60 cruel people to make up one guerrilla group. They don't do that anymore. Now, IB #39 has its own guerrilla group, IB #73 has its own guerrilla group, and IB #124 has its own guerrilla group." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

"During 2000, one of the Baw Bi Doh ['short pants'] groups entered there [Than Daung Gyi]. The most famous one among them is called [Captain] Cheh Tee. Their leader is called Column Commander Kyaw Zaw Han. They call their group the 'Wei Za' [Wisdom] guerrilla group. They have at least forty soldiers whenever they travel anywhere. All forty of them don't move around together. When they arrive at a place they separate into groups [sections] of four or five people. Every group has a walkie-talkie with them. They go around and do whatever they like. They demand food and hit people; especially in the area to the west of the Day Loh River where the villages are close to Than Daung Gyi." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG field researcher (Interview 3, 8/02)

Some villagers from the region have stated that Karens are also within the ranks of the Dam Byan Byaut Kya. Some of these Karens are former KNLA soldiers who have defected to the SPDC; others are regular SPDC Army soldiers who come from the Karen areas of Rangoon and the Irrawaddy Delta. This is consistent with reports from Nyaunglebin, Thaton and Papun Districts where Karen speaking members of the Guerrilla Retaliation Units have also been reported. Having Karens within their ranks would help the Dam Byan Byaut Kya to overcome the obvious language barrier. They would be able to more efficiently interrogate Karen villagers and be able to listen in on conversations, especially by sitting under the villagers' houses at night, as they have been reported to do. Furthermore, if these soldiers are in fact KNLA defectors, they would likely have knowledge of KNLA tactics and strategies. If they are from units in Toungoo District, they would also be able to point out which of the villagers have been

helping the KNU in the area. According to a KHRG field researcher, some of the Bweh (one of the Karen subgroups) Karen villagers living in Than Daung township have been arrested by the SPDC and forced to become soldiers in the Army, ten percent of whom have been assigned to the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya*.

"The SPDC chose the KNU soldiers who went back to surrender to them. They can speak Karen. Then the SPDC Army used them as guerrillas." - "Saw Bee Thaw" (M, 30), KHRG field researcher (Interview #2, 2/01)

"The IB #124 battalion [camp] is in Than Daung Gyi. Their leader is Nay Lin; he is a Karen from Rangoon." - "Saw K'Paw Heh" (M, 53), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #182 3/02)

"I have heard that they have captured some villagers and forced them to be soldiers. They have captured some Karen people from their villages and taken them to IB #124 [in Than Daung Gyi]. There are some Bweh Karen people from Than Daung township there also. They have given them [basic] military training and the guerrilla training as well. They don't have many Karen people; if they have twenty Karens, then they will only keep two or three of them as guerrillas." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

'Peace Groups' and the People's Militia

Splinter groups from the KNU have not had as much of an impact on Toungoo District as they have in other Karen areas to the south. The only major defection was in 1997 when two KNLA officers and a few of their men defected to the SPDC. The two groups were promoted by the SPDC in the much publicised "Exchanging Arms for Peace" program and combined into the 'Nyein Chan Yay A'Pwet' ('Peace Group') [for more on the formation on the 'Peace Group', see "Peace Villages and Hiding Villages: Roads, Relocations, and the campaign for Control in Toungoo District" (KHRG #2000-05, 15/10/00)]. Although the two groups were permitted to retain their arms, they are largely marginalised and have taken no active role in fighting against the KNU/KNLA. The exception was shortly after their defection, when they entered the hills east of the Klay Loh River and burned a number of Ywa Bone villages and plantations in that area. Some of the 'Peace Group' soldiers now reside in Pya Sakan village on the road from Toungoo to Kler Lah, and another group lives at Leit Tho on the road to Loikaw. The 'Peace Group' spends much of its time running the small logging businesses which the SPDC gave them in return for surrendering. This group is not allied in any way with another 'Peace Group' which operates in Dooplaya District farther to the south. The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), which operates throughout much of the rest of Karen State, has never operated in Toungoo District.

"I have heard about Saw Ah Dee and Saw Kweh Moo. They surrendered in 1997. They went to make peace and then they went to stay in Pya Sakan. ... They went back, and now they stay separately. They wanted to go back and live quietly [in peace]. They wanted to work so that they could eat quietly. ... They went back in 1997. After that they came back and burned all of the villages in Than Daung township. They burned all of the villages which didn't face the SPDC. They [the villagers] had to flee and went to stay to the south of the river. Yes, it was Bo [officer] Ah Dee's and Bo Kweh Moo's units which came and burned the villages. Since they went back again, they have never come back and been active among the mountains anymore. They just went to stay in town like that. [They burned] a lot of villages; they were Thay Mu Der, Pwee Kee, Maw Tu Der, Ber Ka Lay Koh, Sho Ko, and Htee T'Pu. ... When they came, they destroyed a lot of people's belongings like cardamom plantations. They also cut down their betelnut plantations and coconut plantations. They cut down whatever they saw. They even pulled out all of the small betelnut trees that the people were growing." -"Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

A Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) battalion lead by Bo Ta Neh and stationed just across the border in Karenni State, defected to the SPDC in October 2002. Renaming themselves the Karenni Solidarity Organisation (KnSO), they established their headquarters at Kwa Kee village in Karenni State. They have been operating closely with SPDC Army columns, most notably in the offensive in northern Karen and southern Karenni States in December 2003 and January 2004 when some units of the KnSO accompanied SPDC columns into Toungoo District. The KnSO had approximately 100 men under arms when they first defected, but many have since returned to the KNPP, leaving the KnSO with a force of only about 35 men. They operate in small sections with SPDC columns and do not have much real power. Another Karenni group, the Karenni Nationalities People's Liberation Front (KNPLF), also operates in the southwestern portion of Karenni State bordering Toungoo District. This group occasionally issues orders to villages in Toungoo District, but mostly keeps to itself in Karenni State.

The SPDC has been expanding its Pyithu Sit ('People's Army') in many Karen areas, especially in Mon State and Tennaserim Division. The Southern Command began forcing local villagers to join the Pyitthu Sit in Toungoo District in March 2002. The Pyithu Sit function as a local militia with members conscripted from the villages. Village heads are usually given a quota of how many men from the village should 'join' the militia. The villagers are then given military training and weapons. Once the training is finished the Pyithu Sit are expected to patrol the area around their village and keep resistance groups from entering the village. They are also sometimes required to accompany SPDC columns as guides. Villagers from villages near the Kler Lah relocation site as well as from Twenty Miles, Thu Keh Der and Htee Hta Pu villages have been ordered to meet quotas of men established by the SPDC. One village head told KHRG that one person from each house in his village had to join. In Twenty Miles village, 30 villagers had to go, Thu Keh Der village had to send 25 villagers and Htee Hta Pu had to send 30 villagers.

"Now the people [SPDC] are asking me to join the reserve militia [Pyithu Sit]. Even though my children are small I joined. I am not a bad man. I am an ordinary man and work daily for food." -"Saw Hla Kaw Paw" (M, 63), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #93, 4/02)

"In the beginning of March 2002, one of the groups [battalions] told us that they will call militia from each village. One person has to go from each house, so it causes a big problem for our villagers and civilians. We don't know what to do. We can only suffer everything." - "Saw No Poh" (M, 49), village head from M— village, Than Daung township (Interview #159, 3/02)

The KNU and KNLA

Toungoo District is the area of operations of the KNLA 2nd Brigade. With its rugged mountainous terrain and thick forest, Toungoo District is ideally suited for guerrilla warfare. Since the late 1990's KNLA-held territory has been limited to pockets within the eastern hills, but KNLA soldiers have been able to reach most areas of the district. Soldiers of the 2nd Brigade operate in small units carrying out hit and run attacks and ambushes against SPDC Army units and harassment attacks on SPDC camps. The SPDC's increased militarization of the district and the pushing through of roads is making it increasingly difficult for the KNLA to hold on to this territory. Being outmanned and outgunned has necessitated that the KNLA guerrillas must outmanoeuvre the SPDC. The fact that they still remain to fight is a testament of their knowledge of the land and of guerrilla tactics. KNLA units have been able to carry out ambushes and harassment attacks on SPDC columns and camps even in strongly held areas such as around Kler Lah and Than Daung Gyi. Many of the KNLA's ambushes are sprung with landmines because ammunition is in short supply. The KNLA, short of funds and supplies, produce their own homemade landmines that they use for perimeter defence of their camps, at sites where internally displaced villagers are living, and in ambushes against the SPDC [see 'Landmines'].

"There are many SPDC soldiers and the KNU doesn't have many bullets and [mortar] shells, so they use landmines." - "Saw Play Kaw" (M, 31), Karen relief worker (Interview #197, 8/03)

The KNLA, being a guerrilla army, is highly vulnerable to attack from the SPDC through the harassment and abuse of the villagers. The KNU and KNLA still enjoy widespread support among the villagers. However, much of this support is moral rather than physical, especially among the Nyein Chan Yay villagers. Nyein Chan Yay villagers have had their villages shelled or shot up by small arms after SPDC troops have been ambushed or stepped on landmines near the villages. Villager heads must report any movements of the KNLA to local SPDC Army outposts. Village heads have been arrested and tortured after being accused of helping the resistance. This has created a climate of fear among the villagers who are now less willing to help the KNU as they were before. Despite this, some of the villagers in the mountains still help the KNLA when they can, especially the villagers living outside of SPDC control. The KNU/KNLA, in turn, helps to bring in whatever small amounts of aid can be provided for the internally displaced villagers. The villagers and the KNLA warn each other of approaching columns, and sometimes small KNLA units provide some security for the villagers' hiding sites.

"Whenever we go out, we have to find out their [KNU] plans. ... If anything is destroyed, they [SPDC] will blame the villagers. We have to pass on any information. If we hear any plans of the Karen resistance [KNU], we have to tell them [SPDC] all of it. If any incidents occur, they will burn our houses or they will force us to relocate. ... They told me, 'If any incidents occur in your



A KNLA soldier removing a Burmese-made MM-2 antipersonnel landmine the day after two villagers were killed after stepping on other landmines at the same location. Of the 20 mines believed to be at this location, the KNLA was only able to locate and remove six of them. [KHRG]

village, because you are the responsible person [village head], we will kill you first, and then we will relocate your villagers". – "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)

"He [Captain Cheh Tee from the Wei Za Guerrilla Retaliation Unit] always demanded information [about the KNU]. He said that he would kill us if we did not tell him anything. He said that the laws were slight [could be broken] and that he could kill us if he wanted to; that he had already killed about a hundred people." - Saw Ba Htee (M, 32), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #97, 3/01)

"If we don't send them the information [regarding movements of the KNU/KNLA] and an incident [a battle] occurs, they will punish the village head. They will kill or they will take action. They told us that if we do not send them any information and an incident occurs in the village or if they [KNLA] attack the [SPDC] Army camp, they will demand 100 viss [163 kgs. / 360 lbs.] of pork for one bullet. Then they will arrest the village heads and torture them." - "Saw Keh Su" (M, 50), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #30, 7/01)



A group of internally displaced villagers from Than Daung township taking a rest while going to buy rice from a nearby village [KHRG]

III. Nyein Chan Yay Villages

"Even though they call them 'Nyein Chan Yay' ['Peace Villages'], they [the villagers] can't live in peace." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

The SPDC consolidated their control over the plains of the Sittaung River basin in the west of the district in the 1990s and are now determined to extend that control to cover the hills as well. Villages that lie within the areas of SPDC control have been dubbed 'Nyein Chan Yay' ('Peace') villages by the SPDC Army commanders and authorities. This, however, is something of a misnomer; there is very little peace in these villages. The term 'Nyein Chan Yay' refers to an arrangement that has been reached between the local SPDC Army battalions and the village elders, in which the villagers promise to not have any contact with the resistance and to comply with the SPDC's demands in exchange for being exempted from forced relocation or from having their homes burned down. The demands that the Nyein Chan Yay villagers must comply with include being forced to work as forced labour for the SPDC, paying large sums of money through extortion, giving food to SPDC military units without compensation and facing travel restrictions. The concept of the Nyein Chan Yay villages appears to have originated with Kler Lah village, but has since spread to many other villages across the district.

"They [SPDC] forced us to sign [a document], saying that nothing will happen in the village [that the villagers will not help the KNU]. If something should occur in the village they will kill us. The Operations Commander in Kler Lah told us this." - "Saw Maw Thee" (M, 18), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #77, 5/02)

"The civilians who stay under the control of the SPDC have no rights." - "Saw Zaw Oo" (M, 47), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #103, 3/02)

Most of the Nyein Chan Yay villages are located along the road between Toungoo and Kler Lah, the two roads which fork from there to Bu Sah Kee and to Mawchi in Karenni State, the area surrounding Than Daung Gyi, the Maw Nay Pwa area to the south of Klaw Mi Der, and the area around Htee Tha Saw and Thauk Yay Ka in the northeast of the district. Most Nyein Chan Yay villages are located either adjacent or close to SPDC Army camps. Villages that are located much farther afield have been relocated to new locations close to camps or along the car roads where the SPDC may more easily watch over them and exploit them as a ready source of forced labour.

"If they live with the Burmese [soldiers] they have to help the Burmese, but they don't want to. If we look at the people who live in the Nyein Chan Yay areas, [we see that] they have to help in many ways. They have to face many problems in many ways. They have to give money for porters; they have to go for loh ah pay; sometimes, they have to go and carry loads; sometimes they have to go and build the roads; or they have to go and build their Army camps. Sometimes the soldiers who are active in the area demand to eat rice. Some of them also demand salt. Some of them demand pigs and chickens to eat. ... When the Burmese [soldiers] come, they let the women and children stay in the village. The men and the boys of about fourteen or fifteen years old and up have to flee when the Burmese soldiers come, because they are afraid that if they do not run away the Burmese will capture them and force them to carry [a load for them]." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

Forced Relocation

"They gave us two weeks to leave. We didn't dare to stay in the village anymore. They said that if they saw anyone staying in the village, they would shoot them dead. When they first sent us to the relocation site, I thought that they were going to give us food, and wood and bamboo to build our houses, but when we arrived there they only gave us two or three pieces of bamboo. We thought that they would give us one or two sacks of rice, but they didn't give us [anything]; not even one milk tin of rice. We had to find everything ourselves." - "Saw Pa Heh" (M, 47), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #104, 3/02)

The SPDC, and the SLORC before them, has long used the forced relocation of villages as a part of its counter-insurgency strategy. The SPDC believes that distancing the villagers from the KNU/KNLA will cut their lines of supply and thus undermine the resistance. The relocation sites which the villagers are ordered to move to have typically been located close to SPDC Army camps along the few roads that penetrate the hills. Relocating the villagers there allows them to be more easily used as a ready source of forced labour to build and repair the roads, maintain the Army's camps, and to porter supplies to the camps along the roads and into the mountains. This strategy may most clearly be seen by looking at Kler Lah village [see Map 3 of Toungoo District], strategically located at the junction of the two most important roads in the district. With over 300 households, Kler Lah is the largest relocation site in Toungoo District. Villagers from this relocation site are often forced to carry supplies for the SPDC to the outlying military camps in groups of one hundred or more, especially down the road to Bu Sah Kee. They are also often called upon to repair both the Toungoo-Mawchi road and the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee

Villages are rarely given much notice when they are relocated. Some villagers have told KHRG field researchers that they were given two weeks notice prior to being relocated, while others have claimed that they were forced to move immediately, being given no notice whatsoever. Most of their belongings must be left behind because they are unable to carry them to the relocation sites. Much of what is left behind is later looted or destroyed by SPDC Army patrols who sweep through the area to check for anyone who attempted to remain behind. Any food left behind is commonly eaten by SPDC Army soldiers. Whatever cannot be eaten is usually destroyed or rendered inedible. Rice and paddy is poured out onto the ground or mixed with sand, while livestock is shot and either eaten or left to rot.

"They wrote a letter [ordering their relocation] and they also came to the village. If we didn't go, they would have driven us out. We were afraid, so we went just like that. All of the

villagers went. If they hadn't gone, they [SPDC] would have killed them. When they forced us to move, they said to not take our things. We took whatever we could, but the rest of the things that we couldn't take, they came and ate. We couldn't take all of our chickens and pigs; they ate and destroyed the rest of them when they came to the village. After we went there [to the relocation site], they went to our village and took all of our belongings that we left behind. They took our pigs, chickens, pots, everything. When we went back there nothing was left. When we arrived there [at the relocation site], they didn't come and help us with anything. What is more, they came and threatened us. Some people fled to sleep in the jungle and hid in their cardamom plantations. They [SPDC] tried to arrest people. - "Saw Soe Tint" (M, 60), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #174, 3/02)

"All of the people had to go. They do not dare to stay and not go [to the relocation site]. We had to go. We had to go, because it is the Army's law. If we did not go, they would have killed us. They only gave us six days [in which to move]. The time was too short. We lost all of our belongings. They took them and ate or destroyed them. Our rice, fishpaste, salt, pots, and many other things in the house; all of them were lost."

- "Saw Zaw Oo" (M, 47), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #103, 3/02)

"When the Burmese [soldiers] drove us to xxxx [relocation site], it was very difficult; it was during the harvest. They said that on the 18th, all of the villagers must go [to the relocation site]; if they didn't go, they [SPDC] would come and hit them. We couldn't take our belongings; we just had to go like that. When we were staying there, we didn't have enough food to eat. They wouldn't allow us to come back and get our things. They let their soldiers come to our village. They came here and destroyed all of our things." - "Naw Thet Wah" (F, 58), forcibly relocated villager from P—village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

Upon arriving at the relocation site, the villagers are not provided with anything by the SPDC. Not being able to dismantle their homes prior to being relocated, the villagers arrive with no wood or bamboo with which to construct their new homes, a task that they must complete themselves. They must go out and cut the bamboo themselves from the surrounding forests that are already depleted of much of their bamboo due to the large number of people who must build new houses in the relocation sites. In some cases, when the new arrivals to the relocation site have gone out and cut the bamboo to build their homes, tensions have developed between these new arrivals and the original inhabitants of the village as less bamboo is then left for everyone else. As more and more villagers are ordered to move to the already overcrowded relocation sites, the dwindling supplies of bamboo around those sites become further diminished, until such time as there will be no more bamboo growing on the hills around the relocation sites. Those who are unable to acquire enough bamboo will be vulnerable to illness when the monsoon rains pour into their homes [see the "Health and Education"]. One villager commented to a KHRG researcher that at least ten people died within the first year of being relocated to Kler Lah due to poor sanitation at the site.

We were not happy to stay at the relocation site. It was very difficult for us to stay there. It was very crowded with people; they had to eat, urinate, and shit there. It was too difficult. No one wants to stay there. They would force us to go for loh ah pay; we couldn't stay without going. If we didn't go they would come and threaten us. The people were afraid, so they had to go very often. The Burmese would threaten us, force us to work, and revile us, so we were afraid and fled back to our place and stayed in the jungle."- "Saw Soe Tint" (M, 60), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #174, 3/02)

"They [SPDC] didn't look after us. We had to buy everything. They allowed us to build our houses, but we had to cut the wood and the bamboo. This caused problems for the other villagers." - "Naw Da" (F, 43), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #179, 3/02)

"There were a lot of problems. We had to build our house but we didn't have our own wood or bamboo. We had to go and cut other people's wood and bamboo. Some of the villagers understood, but some of the villagers did not understand and said bad things to us. It made us unhappy. When we first arrived there, it was not easy for us. We had to make our house with bamboo and the roof as well. It was very difficult during the raining season. When it was raining

and there was also wind, we couldn't sleep. Sometimes we couldn't sleep at night; we had to sit there like that the whole night. We would get sick. During the first year when we went to stay [at the Kler Lah relocation site], about ten people died because they got sick; they were old people and children." - "Saw Doh" (M, 50), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #177, 3/02)

"They allowed us [to build homes], but we had to cut the trees and bamboo of the people in Kler Lah, so the people from Kler Lah hated us. They [SPDC] are the people who have the power, so whatever they do, they do it with power. Even if we dare not to do something, we have to do it.""Saw Zaw Oo" (M, 47), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #103, 3/02)

Many villagers arrive at the relocation sites with little or no food, only to find it very difficult to obtain any more. Having forced the villagers to move into areas where they can keep a close eye on them, the SPDC is reluctant to allow the villagers to return to their villages to tend their fields. Some relocation sites forbid the villagers from returning to their fields at all; while others allow them to return, albeit for brief periods of time and only in the possession of a travel pass, which they must pay for [see the "Restrictions" section]. In many cases, the villagers are not able to clear a field at the relocation sites either. The overcrowding of the relocations sites usually means that most, if not all of the available arable land has already been taken, leaving no more land to cultivate. In order to then acquire any food, the villagers must buy rice from traders who bring it in from the plains in the west of the district. Villagers often pay for extra rice from the produce of their betel trees, cardamom bushes and other cash crops which they grow in small plots. Without access to their villages, villagers are unable to take care of their plots, harvest them and sell the produce to raise money with which to buy rice. The only other option for the villagers is to work as day labourers for other villagers in the relocation site. This gives them a small amount of money or some rice for the day, but the work is not regular and many families go hungry when no work is available.

"Since we have had to go and stay at the other village [relocation site], our villagers can't live well anymore. We can't cut enough bamboo to build our houses. We have to carry water, but we don't have enough water. We have to cook with firewood, [but they don't have enough firewood]. It causes problems for us. We have to buy rice to eat, but the price of rice is high."-"Saw Htoo Klih" (M, 48), forcibly relocated village head from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #180, 3/02)

Some villages have been ordered to relocate several times; they relocate and are later allowed to return to the villages, only to be ordered to relocate again. A document obtained by a KHRG field researcher states that on July 27 2001, villagers from Peh Kaw Der, Maw Ko Der, and Der Doh were yet again ordered to relocate to Kler Lah. All three of these villages have been ordered to move numerous times in the past.

The relocation of villages in Toungoo District has not occurred as often in the past few years as in the past. This is in part due to an increase in the SPDC military presence and control. Many villagers, however, continue to flee from the relocation sites back into the forest when the conditions in the sites become intolerable and the rice runs out. When enough villagers have fled and the SPDC decides it is time, there will likely be another round of relocations.

"Including this time, my village has had to move four times. This time is the longest. This time we have stayed [in the relocation site] for over three years already. We could only come back and work in our village. I came back to repair part of my house. Some of the bamboo and the wood has rotted, so I must cut new ones and repair it." - "Saw Po Htun" (M, 78), internally displaced former village head from P—village, Than Daung township (Interview #175, 3/02)

"We have had to relocate twice. ... The Burmese [soldiers] said that we had to relocate to Kler Lah. ... We all had to leave. ... After one year, we asked them [if they could return to the village] and we came back to stay. When we came back, the SPDC told us not to allow any battles to occur near the village, not to welcome the Karen resistance [KNU], and that if they [SPDC] chase the Karen resistance into our village, or if any battles occur in our village, we will have to relocate. If a battle occurs in xxxx [village], xxxx must relocate. If a battle occurs in Kler Lah, then Kler Lah must relocate. There was the sound of a landmine exploding close to Kler Lah, so Kler Lah was ordered to relocate. But [the villagers from] Kler Lah went to report the news to their Bo Choke [Major General] that the sound was close to xxxx, so xxxx had to relocate instead. Xxxx relocated and went to stay in Kler Lah for two years again. After two years they [SPDC] allowed us to come back and stay in our village. ... We relocated the second time in November 1998." - "Saw K'Baw" (M, 43), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #16, 4/01)

Destruction of Property

"We planted cardamom. They burned them. They are demanding taxes; we don't have the money, but we must still pay it." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 22), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

Whenever the SPDC relocates a village, they generally burn it down so that the villagers cannot return and resettle in it. Dozens of villages across Toungoo District have been destroyed for this reason. A burned village leaves behind a lot of physical evidence, so rather than burning the villages after relocating its inhabitants, the SPDC now appears to be favouring leaving the jungle to do the work for them. The bamboo in time rots, which if left untended for long enough, renders the house uninhabitable. The village then appears as though it has simply been abandoned, leaving no evidence which points to the SPDC. Some battalions have planted landmines in villages as a deterrent to keep the villagers from returning while the jungle slowly reclaims the village. The fear of stepping on a mine that may be planted in their village keeps most villagers away. Other villagers have had their houses destroyed, food eaten and belongings looted even though their village is technically a Nyein Chan Yay village. At Kaw Thay Der village in Tantabin township, SPDC soldiers of

LIB #117 came to the village on January 27 2004. They destroyed 48 houses in the village and then looted the villagers' food and belongings. Even the villagers' cats were killed and eaten and their skulls left in the villagers' houses. The soldiers also shat in the villagers' houses. When the soldiers left they threatened the villagers to not tell anyone about what they had done.

"They did not give them any time [notice]. They sent seven families each day until they had finished sending everyone. Before they had finished sending all of the villagers, they burned four houses. After they had finished [relocating everyone], they burned it all. All of their belongings were lost. They relocated the villagers and they did not have enough time to look after their houses or [to gather] any of their things. Everything was destroyed." - "Saw Mu Wah" (M, ?), forcibly relocated villager from S—village, Tantabin township (Interview #76, 10/00)

The SPDC is destroying the fields and plantations of the Nyein Chan Yay villagers. Villagers who already find it difficult to find enough time to work in their fields have told KHRG that SPDC troops have come through and burned their fields or torched their cardamom or betelnut plantations. During the betelnut harvest in December 2000, and also in the cardamom harvest in March 2001, soldiers from IB #26 stole some of the harvest from villagers living in Tantabin township so that they could sell the crop at the markets in Toungoo and keep the profits for themselves. Then the soldiers came back and burned the cardamom and betelnut plantations. In March 2004, SPDC troops from IB #124 burned down 10 cardamom plantations in Naw Thay Der and Der Doh villages. The destruction of the plantations means that the villagers will not be able to buy any rice to make up for shortfalls in their rice harvest caused by not having enough time to work their fields.

"When they [IB #124] came here, they cut and destroyed many plantations belonging to the villagers. In particular, they destroyed many cardamom plantations. There were about twenty people's plantations [which were destroyed]." - "Saw Pee Ghaw" (M, 48), villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #157, 2/02)

"They [IB #26] demanded the villagers' cardamom so that they could sell it in town [Toungoo]. Then they burned the cardamom plantations. When it was the betelnut harvest [December], they demanded the people's betelnut and burned their betelnut plantations." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 18), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

In April 2002, IB's #26, #48, #53, and #73 began work on burning back the brush flanking the car road between Pa Leh Wah and Bu Sah Kee [see Map 3] in order to clear a killing zone along its length. Being at the height of summer, the fire rapidly burned out of control, destroying vast tracts of land. A wide swath of destruction was left in the fire's wake. On the southern side of the road, the forest fire continued to burn until it reached the banks of the Yaw Loh River. This area contained many plantations, many of which were destroyed. A KHRG field researcher estimated that over 2,000 acres (810 hectares) of land were destroyed in the blaze. An estimated 250 viss (408 kgs. / 900 lbs.) of cardamom was destroyed in Kaw So Ko village alone. This quantity of cardamom would have been valued at approximately 750,000 Kyat. This estimate is for the cardamom harvest alone; the value of the betelnut, dog fruit, mangosteen, and durian plantations that were also destroyed in the fire were not included in these estimates. The values of the durian and mangosteen harvests would likely have been higher as both of these crops fetch higher prices in the markets than does cardamom. It is difficult to ascertain whether

this fire was allowed to burn out of control deliberately, or if it genuinely was an accident. Either way, this provides little consolation to the villagers who lost what was most likely their primary, if not only source of income. Cardamom trees are slow to regenerate and do not bear fruit for up to four years following a fire. No compensation was paid to the villagers for the destroyed plantations. These villagers are now left without any income until such time when whatever surviving trees are able to become productive again. Without the money that the sale of these crops would have brought the villagers, they are left without the cash to buy rice and pay the regular system of fees imposed upon them. On March 13 2004, SPDC soldiers from IB #124 set fire to the forest along the Toungoo-Mawchi road in the area of Klay Soe Kee, Gher Mu Der, Ko Day and Tha Aye Hta villages. Again many of the villagers' plantations were burned and destroyed.

"This year, the army came and burned [the vegetation growing] beside the car road from Pa Leh Wah to Kler Lah, Kaw So Ko, and Bu Sah Kee. There were many plantations that were ruined. The commander who ordered this was Strategic Operations Command #3 Operations Commander Captain Thet Oo. He ordered many battalions to go and burn it. They started on April 4 [2002]. They burn like this every year, but it has not been as bad as this year. Other years there were only a few people [soldiers] who came to burn it, but this year all of the battalions who are under the control of the Operations Command, such as IB #48, IB #53, IB #73, and IB #26 came to burn [beside the road]. The people couldn't put the fire out and a lot of villagers' plantations were burned. There was 250 viss [408 kgs. / 900 lbs.] of cardamom burned in Kaw So Ko village. In that area, the price of cardamom for one viss [1.6 kgs. / 3.6 lbs.] is 3,000 Kyat, so they lost a lot. All of the cardamom that was burned would have been worth 750,000 Kyat. That was only the cardamom; it does not include the durian and mangosteen. Durian and mangosteen are both more expensive than cardamom. I would guess that there were over 2,000 acres [of plantations] which were burned. It was all burned all the way to Bu Sah Kee. The people couldn't stop the fires anymore and it became a forest fire. It burned until it reached the Yaw Loh River." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG field researcher (Interview #3, 8/

"During summer [March-April 2002], they [SPDC] burned people's plantations. They burned my plantation. It [usually] yields 30

viss [49 kgs. / 108 lbs.] of cardamom. Now it won't be able to yield again for another two or three years." - "Saw Htay Mu" (M, 34), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #66, 7/02)

"This year they destroyed many plantations. They burned cardamom plantations, betelnut plantations, and some plantations of vegetables. They did this in many places. The cardamom plantations that they destroyed won't be able to yield again for another four years. The cardamom farmers are now faced with a food shortage. They have to starve." - "Naw Hsa Maw" (F, 48), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #67, 7/02)

On April 9 2002, five days after the start of the blaze, the Myawaddy Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) issued the order document shown below, demanding money and goods to be 'donated'

to "the fire refugees in Pya Sakan village". Pya Sakan is located some distance from where local sources state the fire occurred [see Map 3], and no mention is made of any of the villages along the stretch of road between Pa Leh Wah and Bu Sah Kee where the fire actually took place. Pya Sakan is a Nyein Chan Yay village under heavy SPDC control and home to the SPDC-allied 'Peace Group' [refer to "Peace Groups and the People's Militia"], but it is unlikely that this marginalised group had any involvement with this order. It is more likely that this order was simply another excuse for extracting money from the already impoverished villagers, with none of it ever being distributed to any of the 69 alleged fire refugees. Myawaddy township, corresponds roughly to south-eastern Pa'an District [see Map 2], lying approximately 300 kilometres (180 miles) south-east of Pya Sakan. It is highly improbable that little, if any, of this money was ever even sent to Pya Sakan.

Restrictions

"When we go [to our hill fields], we must get a letter of recommendation. If we don't get a letter of recommendation, they will accuse us of being bad people [helping the resistance]. They say silly things. Whenever we go out to get food, we have to have a letter of recommendation. If we go out without a letter of recommendation when they [SPDC] come here, they will force us to follow them for a very long way [forced to be porters]. They would not release us. We have to get a letter of recommendation. When we are looking for food without a letter of recommendation, they arrest us, they beat us and sometimes they kill us." - "Saw Thay Myo" (M, 48), villager from Y— village, Tantabin township (Interview #80, 4/01)

The SPDC keeps the villagers who live in the *Nyein Chan Yay* villages in check by enforcing a wide range of authoritarian restrictions upon them. All of these restrictions are imposed by the SPDC in order to make it difficult for the villagers to have any contact with the resistance, regardless of whether they have any intention to do so or not.

Movement into and out of villages in the SPDC controlled areas is heavily regimented. Should Nyein Chan Yay villagers wish to travel outside of their village, they must be in possession of a travel pass, or a 'letter of recommendation'. These passes are issued by the village head who has been given a stamp by the local Army camp. The costs of the letters of recommendation are sometimes set by the local military unit and sometimes by the village head. If the village head sets the cost, then the money is usually used within the village, often to cover costs for things like giving pork to the Army camp. The limits to the amount of time granted for each pass are set by the local military unit. The fees demanded for these letters of recommendation vary widely from village to village. Some villagers have reported paying only 20 Kyat for a letter of recommendation, while others claim to have paid as much as 200 Kyat;

though the standard rate for most areas in Toungoo District seems to be around 50 Kyat. A village may find that it enjoys relative freedom one month; only to have those freedoms abolished the next, when the battalions rotate and the new battalion sets its own rules for the letters of recommendation.

Letters of recommendation issued in some villages only authorise the villager to be away from the relocation site during the hours of daylight; a villager is not permitted to leave before 6 a.m. and must return by 6 p.m. the same day. This is a significant problem for those villagers residing in relocation sites whose fields are some distance away from the relocation site. Some of these villagers must walk for two or three hours to and from their fields, leaving only a few hours in which they can tend to their crops. Furthermore, by not being permitted to spend the night in their fields they are unable to watch over their crops and scare away any wild animals. The villagers need to spend much of their time in the fields to protect their crops from wild animals and insects as the paddy ripens. By not being permitted to do so much of their crop is then lost after being eaten or destroyed by the animals.

"We have to get a letter of recommendation. If we don't get a letter of recommendation we don't dare to go out [of the village]. We only dare to go when we get a letter of recommendation." -"Saw Maw Shwe" (M, 39), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #14, 4/01)

"When the villagers go to their beteInut plantations or their hill fields, they have to get a letter of recommendation. If they don't get a letter of recommendation and they [SPDC] see them, they say that they are going to take action [against them]. They can go out at six o'clock in the morning and they have to arrive back at six o'clock in the evening." - "Naw Hser Lay" (F, 52) villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #15, 4/01)

Other villagers have spoken of being able to obtain letters of recommendation which allow them to be away from their village for up to one week. Upon expiry, the villagers must return to the village where they can renew the pass and then return to their fields. In mid-2004, SPDC units in the plains of western Tantabin township ordered the villagers in Pyin Gan and Taw Ma Inn villages to get two recommendation letters a week. Each letter cost 200 Kyat. Villages in the Shan See Boh area, also in the plains, were ordered by IB #60 to get one recommendation letter per week at 100 Kyat each. Remaining away from the village after the expiry of the letter of recommendation can lead to serious repercussions; in which case arrests and beatings usually ensue. However, not all Nyein Chan Yay villages are able to obtain a letter of recommendation that allows them to travel outside the confines of their village. Those who find themselves in this situation must either remain in the village without any food or attempt to sneak out. The risks of doing this are high as the penalties of being caught by the SPDC are severe. Villagers without passes may be accused of helping the resistance, arrested and tortured, and sometimes summarily executed. In mid-2004, IB #92 decreed that all the villagers to the north of the Day Loh River were not to cross to the south side of the river. They did not want the villagers to stay in Swa Loh, Bo Daing or Tha Yay Bah villages which have been relocated. The villagers were told that if the soldiers saw any villagers, they would all be shot dead, and if the soldiers saw any boats travelling on the river, they would also shoot the boat drivers dead.

"We have to get a letter of recommendation. We have to get a letter of recommendation for one week. When it is finished after one week, we have to get another letter. They demand fifty Kyat for one letter of recommendation. We have to go back after the letter of recommendation is finished. If we don't get a letter of recommendation, when they see us on the way,

they take us back [they are arrested]. They call us back to the village and then we have to go and porter loads to Naw Soe and Bu Sah Kee."-"Saw K'Baw" (M, 43), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #16, 4/01)

"He saw me and asked me about my letter of recommendation. My letter of recommendation was overdue by two days. I was sick and couldn't go back [to the village]. He hit me six times with a cane. He also hit my son." - "Saw Kler Paw" (M, 38), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #98, 3/01)



This warning sign written in Burmese was placed beside a path leading to plantations just outside the Kler Lah relocation site. It reads, 'Do not cut the trees. There are landmines'. Since the SPDC installed this sign, many villagers have not dared to travel to their plantaions for fear of stepping on one of the mines. [KHRG]

"I was the village head in the past [in October, 2000] when they came to Y—. I had to go and meet them and they told me, 'The villagers must get a pass if they want to go somewhere. If we see the people travelling without a pass we will treat them as our enemies. If we see them like that, we will kill them.' I told him, 'Sometimes our villagers do not have a pass, but they are really our villagers.' They didn't agree with me." - "Saw Bway Htoo" (M, 32), former village head from Y— village, Tantabin township (Interview #91, 1/02)

"When we stayed at the relocation site, the SPDC didn't give us any rights. They wouldn't allow us to come back and work. The enemy [SPDC] wouldn't allow us to come back home, but we couldn't find any food, so we had to come back secretly. Some people could stay, but we didn't have any food, so we couldn't stay there [within the relocation site] any longer. If the enemies [SPDC] saw us when we fled back [into the jungle], they would have hit us. We had to stay as quietly as we could. They would tell us, 'Don't go back [to the village]. If you go back, you will meet the rebels and you might feed them. None of you can go back. If you go back, we will kill all of you."" - "Saw Soe Tint" (M, 60), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #174, 3/02)

Villagers living close to Than Daung Gyi must report to IB #124 at the Bayinnaung Army camp in Than Daung Gyi for their letters of recommendation. While these passes allow the villagers to remain away from the village for one week, they stipulate that they are only permitted to take two bowls (2.5 kgs. / 7 lbs.) of rice with them for that period. This small amount of rice would only last a villager for half of that period, forcing the villagers to return to the village at least once during the week so that they can get more rice before returning to the fields. The SPDC believes that should a villager take more rice than this, they are giving it to the KNU/KNLA.

"If we don't have the recommendation card, they will create big problems for us. We have to go and get the recommendation card from Than Daung Gyi. They give us one week, [after that] we have to get a new one. On the recommendation card they only allow us to take two bowls [2.5 kgs./7 lbs.] of rice, so we have to go back and buy rice twice a week." - "Saw La Bo" (M, 46), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township Interview #131, 11/02)

The villagers need to go to their fields to tend their crops so that they will have enough food to see them through until the next harvest. By not being allowed to return to their fields and plantations, or by not being able to harvest all of their crops in the brief time that some of them are permitted, many villagers must supplement their rice supply by buying rice from traders who bring rice up from the plains. The shipment of rice from the plains is fundamentally controlled by the SPDC, who can close the roads into the hills and not allow the rice shipments to pass through the many checkpoints along those roads. Through their control of the roads, the SPDC can effectively halt the flow of rice into the hills, which then leaves the villagers, who are dependant upon those deliveries, with almost nothing to eat when their rice runs out. Even when rice is brought up to the markets in the larger villages and towns in the hills, villagers cannot buy the rice unless they have been granted permission to do so. This permission comes in the form of yet another permit that the villagers must buy from the SPDC's authorities. A KHRG field researcher maintains that these rice permits can cost as much as 10,000 Kyat each, depending on the amount of rice that a villager wishes to buy. Some villagers grow cash crops to sell so that they can get enough money to buy more rice or other foodstuffs to supplement their diet, or to pay the various forced labour and extortion fees.

"Now they block us from buying food and rice; they do not allow us to buy it. They do not allow the trucks to come and carry the rice to the hill area." - "Saw Ghee Soe" (M, 35), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #54, 4/02)

"Sometimes when our rice is gone and when we want to buy some more, they block the road and don't allow people [from the plains] to sell their rice. They don't allow us to buy rice because they don't give us permission. We can't buy rice if they don't give us permission." - "Naw Po Ka Bla" (F, 40), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #68, 7/02)

"The villagers who live in Kler Lah have to get a permit to buy rice. They can only buy as much rice as they are allowed. The amount depends on the SPDC; if they like the people, then they will give them a pass, and if they don't like the people, then they won't give them a pass. The passes are very expensive; they cost about 10,000 Kyat. It depends upon the amount of rice that people want to buy. Even if they have a rice permit, when they come back on the path, they have to pay [bribes] at the checkpoints on the way."- "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

Many villagers are limited in the amount of rice that they are allowed to buy. Villagers who go to buy their rice in Than Daung Gyi are only permitted to purchase four bowls (6.3 kgs. / 14 lbs.) of rice at any one time. Some of them have claimed that upon returning to their village, they are then forced to store their rice at the local Army camp who then return it to them in a ration of only two milk tins (390 grams / 14 ozs.) of rice per person per day. Any rice left over at the end of the week is then eaten by the soldiers. This rerationing of the rice after the villagers have already paid for it results in each person receiving only about half as much rice as is necessary for an adult living in the hills to eat. This amount of rice is not sufficient enough to provide them with adequate calories to satisfy the rigours of life in the hills. This proves to be guite a problem, especially for those villagers who must travel any distance in order to buy rice, as they

must repeat the journey again in as little as three or four days as their rice supply runs out. For some villagers it takes an entire day or longer to complete the round trip, so they barely arrive home before having to leave again [see also "Food Security"].

"If we go to buy rice from Than Daung Gyi, they only allow us to take four bowls [6.5 kgs. / 14 lbs.] of rice. When we bring it back to them [to the Army camp], they restrict us; they give us only two milk tins [390 grams / 14 ozs.] of rice [per person] per day. We are the people from the mountains, two milk tins are not enough for us; some people eat four or five milk tins [per day]. They give us only ten [sic: fourteen] milk tins of rice per week; they take the rest of the rice to Kyo Ta Tan Army camp." - "Saw Ler Kee" (M, 35), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #187, 11/02)

Medicines also have restrictions placed upon them. Special permission must be sought before attempting to buy any medications in much the same way as when buying rice. The logic is the same as that for the restrictions on rice: the SPDC believes that any medicine that the villagers buy will be given to the KNU. The prohibitions placed on medications have serious implications on the health of those living in *Nyein Chan Yay* villages. Many villagers suffering from serious, but treatable, illnesses die because they are unable to purchase the medications to treat themselves [see 'Health and Education' later in this section]. Villagers who are unable to buy medicines must rely on traditional cures made from roots and vegetable found in the forest.

"In our village, the villagers are faced with a problem when they want to buy medicine or rice. We must ask for permission from them [SPDC]. They control us and restrict us in many ways." - "Thra Po Lah" (M, 38), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #69, 7/02)

"When we want to buy things, we can only buy them if they [SPDC] allow us. If we want to buy a sack of rice, we have to pay them 300 to 400 Kyat and they will then allow us to buy it. Now they do not let us carry medicine. Whatever we carry, we carry only because they have allowed us; especially rice and medicine – we can't carry them if we don't get permission." - "Saw Ba Aye" (M, 47), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #55, 4/02)

Prohibitions have also been imposed on the possession of batteries. The majority of villagers buy batteries for use in torchlights or for the few who have small transistor radios. The SPDC has prohibited them from buying batteries because they believe that the villagers may then give them to the

KNLA soldiers who will in turn use them in their walkie-talkies or in the detonators of their homemade landmines. Villagers caught carrying batteries have been arrested by SPDC soldiers and beaten.

"We have to buy batteries and use torchlights so we can travel in the night time. When we [started] doing this, they stopped us buying batteries. We don't have any light anymore. We don't even have any kerosene or any candles. The situation isn't good for us. We can only walk in the day time, we can't walk in the night time." - "Saw Y'Gaw Ko" (M, 35), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #132, 12/02)

Karen villagers in the hills have traditionally kept musket-like percussion lock firearms that they have used to protect their crops from wild animals and to hunt small game to supplement their diets. However, the Than Daung Township Peace and Development Council (TPDC) prohibited the villagers from keeping these weapons in 2000. Those villagers who were known to be in possession of these weapons had them confiscated and their names recorded. These weapons have almost no military value whatsoever, but the SPDC seems to think that villages holding these weapons may try to take a shot at the soldiers. Some villagers in other parts of the district have been allowed to retain these weapons if they register them and pay a regular monthly registration fee [see 'Fees' in 'Fees, Extortion and Looting'].

"The Ma Ya Ka [Township Peace and Development Council] chairpersons have declared it illegal to have Tu Mi Thay Na [percussion lock firearms] under the law for keeping weapons. It is part of the culture of the villagers to have Tu Mi Thay Na to shoot wild animals for the protection of their crops. They have ordered each Village Tract Peace and Development Council and Village Peace and Development Council chairperson to carry out this order. They do not allow the village tracts to have Tu Mi Thay Na or gunpowder. Anyone who has them will have action taken against them according to the law. The names of the villagers who have Tu Mi Thay Na or gunpowder were registered and given to the Township Peace and Development Council on July 25, 2000." - Field report from an anonymous Karen villager, Than Daung township (FR2, 7/00)

"They took my two Shay Toe [musket-like percussion lock firearms]; those two guns would have been worth 30,000 Kyat." - "Saw Ti Ki'Daw" (M, 55), internally displaced villager from B— village, Than Daung township (Interview #154, 1/02)

Forced Labour

"The SPDC forced one of the villagers to carry their things. He had to carry their rice, fishpaste, and other things. He had to carry about 30 viss [49 kgs./108 lbs.]. They forced him to carry a very heavy load. Even though he couldn't carry it, he had to. As they ate, it became a little lighter, but then they would put more in. When he arrived home he was sick. He fell very hard so he had to go to Taw Oo for treatment. He had to go on January 27th 2002, and didn't come back until February 9th.... Some of the villagers who have to go with the SPDC catch colds and are sick when they come back. There is no medicine and they don't have any money to go and buy medicine." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), forcibly relocated village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

The omnipresent use of forced labour is arguably the most serious human rights violation taking place in Toungoo District. Almost every villager in villages under SPDC control who was interviewed by KHRG stated that they have had to go for forced labour. Villagers who must report for forced labour for the SPDC are unable to spend enough time in their fields and plantations. Villagers who must go as porters or are ordered to clear the brush from alongside the roads are also exposed to the threat of the many landmines planted throughout the region. The fear of having to go for forced labour has resulted in a system wherein large sums of money are extorted from the villagers who hope that by paying the money they will not have to go for the labour. The SPDC claims that the money is given to the porters and other forced labourers, but very little of it ever is [see 'Forced Labour Fees' in the 'Fees, Extortion and Looting' section].

After years of pressure by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), on May 14th 1999, the SPDC released Order 1/99 banning some types of forced labour throughout the country. Forced labour continued, however, and the SPDC was told by the ILO to put a stop to it or there would be consequences. Due to a lack of progress on the part of the SPDC, in June 2000 the ILO voted to take measures in accordance with Article 33 of its Constitution. This article had never been applied to any country in the ILO's 84-year history. When nothing had changed after a six month grace period, the ILO enacted Article 33 stopping all technical cooperation with the SPDC and asking its member nations, trade unions and employers' organisations to review their relations with the Burmese regime to ensure that nothing they were doing would contribute to the continuation of forced labour. The SPDC then, at the last moment, claimed to have issued 'Supplementary Order to Order 1/99' on October 27th 2000. This order supposedly imposed a broader ban on forced labour and prescribed punishment for anyone demanding it. The order was followed on November 1st by a similar, and in some ways stronger, order issued by Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary-1 of the SPDC. The SPDC claimed that every township, village tract and village head in the country had been told about the order, and that they could complain to the appropriate authorities if anyone demanded forced labour from them, and that person would be arrested. The ILO followed this up in 2001 by sending a High Level Team (HLT) to investigate whether the SPDC claims were true and whether this had done anything to reduce the amount of forced labour. The HLT determined in its report that while the orders had been distributed widely, they had not gone to every village and that forced labour was still ongoing [copies of the English language versions of the above orders may be found in "SPDC & DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003 (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003)].

Q: Have you ever heard about [Order] 1/99? A: No, I have never heard [of that]. - "Saw Luh Kyi" (M, 34), forcibly relocated village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #120, 3/02)

"The SPDC has proclaimed [Order] 1/99, and we showed it to them, but they didn't like this. They just keep using forced labour." - "Saw Pah Baw" (M, 48), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #121, 3/02)

Villagers interviewed by KHRG indicated that forced labour did decrease prior to and during the HLT's visit, but then increased again afterward. Both villagers and KHRG researchers report that forced labour is now somewhat less than it was in past years, but they say that it is still at unacceptable levels [see"Forced Labour Orders Since the Ban: A Compendium of SPDC Order Documents Demanding Forced Labour Since November **2000"** (KHRG #2002-01, 8/2/2002), and "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003)]. Many village heads have also told KHRG researchers that they have not received a copy of any of the orders, some claim to have not even heard of it. Instead of halting the use of forced labour and punishing people for demanding it, the SPDC has been trying to cover it up. Written orders demanding forced labour are becoming increasingly uncommon. Many SPDC Army officers and

authorities instead summon the village heads to meetings and dictate their demands verbally. Some SPDC officers call the villagers to 'discussions' to talk about the forced labour first before simply ordering the villagers to go and do it. Other SPDC officers have summoned villagers to meetings where they force the villagers to sign statements that they are contributing their labour voluntarily. It is understood by the village heads that if they do not sign the statement they are risking having their village relocated or some other retribution from the Army, as well as having to go for the forced labour anyway. For example, on July 15th 2004, a company commander from IB #73 at Shan See Boh in Tantabin township ordered the villagers from Shan See Boh, Yay Shan, Taw Gone and Zee Pyu Gone to go to a meeting the next day at Shan See Boh. The villagers were ordered at the meeting to build a camp for the soldiers at Tha Ya Wa. The villagers had to build the soldiers' barracks and a warehouse. On the next day, the villagers had to go again to continue building the camp and to make three fences in concentric circles around the camp. They were also ordered to clear the brush from around the camp.

"We have heard about [Order] 1/99, and we thought that when they now come to our area they would be better, but it is not like that. Now when they come to stay at the frontline, they force us to work as their commander demands them to." - "Saw Htun Aye" (M, 40), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #50, 3/02)

"In the past, they said that they would deal with the villagers nicely and that they wouldn't force the villagers [to do things for them]. But they are doing just that and they are forcing the villagers, and demanding porter fees."- "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)

"We have had to carry their loads all the time, but beginning in 2001 they have reduced how often they demand the porters to carry the loads. Before they demanded 10,000 to 12,000 [Kyat] each month [in porter fees], but from the beginning of July or August, they have reduced it a little." - "Saw Way K'Lu Say" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #38, 1/02)

"Before, it [the amount of forced labour] was worse, but beginning in August or September [2001] it has been reduced a little bit." - "Saw Baw Koh" (M, 30), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #45, 1/02)

"Before, there was IB #92, and then there was IB #73. After that IB #73 left and IB #92 came back again. The first time when they came they were

very bad, but later when they came again they reduced it a little because they were restricted. It is a little better because of this restriction. Before they did as they wanted."- "Saw Maw Htoo" (M, 46), village tract head, xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #32, 7/01)

"They are afraid of Order 1/99 regarding forced labour so they use the soft way and say, 'Before we force you, we have to discuss it with you first.' They don't use as much forced labour [now] and before they force us they hold a discussion. It is not possible for us [not to go for portering] because we live in the frontline area so we have to deal with people from the left arm and the right arm [both the SPDC and the KNU]. If we don't help them we will be faced with a problem. They are the armed forces so killing is not difficult for them." - "Saw Bo Kee" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #75, 7/02)

"In 2001 and 2002, the SPDC commanders summoned the village heads to a meeting where they forced the village heads to sign [a document] saying that the SPDC did not force the villagers to do portering and loh ah pay, but really they use forced labour. They did that in case they had to deny it. The village heads are afraid of them so they had to sign it. The SPDC tells the villagers in the Kaw Thay Der area not to say that the SPDC forces them to do labour. The villagers have to say that they are volunteers." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

Another tactic which the SPDC is using is to redefine the terms used for forced labour. This has been done to put a better 'face' on the forced labour and make it appear better internationally. Successive Burmese regimes have used the state-controlled media to present the labour of the villagers as completely voluntary and performed out of their love for the country. To get this across, the old Pali term, loh ah pay, is often used. This term is normally used when talking about the traditional voluntary labour that villagers perform to gain merit, typically by maintaining the temple or clearing the path to the next village. Burmese regimes, however, have used the term when demanding labour at Army camps and for other short-term forced labour, so this is what it has also come to mean for villagers, although the labour is never voluntary. Long-term or heavier forced labour such as portering or road-building was never referred to as loh ah pay by the villagers, but in the past couple of years SPDC soldiers have been using the term when ordering villagers to go for portering. This has had the effect of confusing the issue and the SPDC hopes making portering sound 'nicer' to foreigners. It is also a way of tricking the villagers to go as porters when they thought that they were going to do easier work in the Army camp.

"Before, we had to go regularly. Five people had to go each month. Sometimes they would demand that eight or nine people go. Now they don't tell us to go and porter anymore. They tell us to go and do loh ah pay. We still have to go for that [portering]. It is not any different, we still have to carry just the same. It is not any different, they just call it by a different name." - "Saw Doh" (M, 50), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #177, 3/02)

Portering

"Their [the SPDC's] behaviour is not like ours. They think that they have a lot of power. Whenever they come here, they oppress every village. When they speak to us, their faces are not good. The SPDC has more power than the villagers. They want to oppress the civilians. When they see people, they force them to go to Bu Sah Kee or Naw Soe: they force the people to work. If we do not go, they go and arrest people to go and porter. They arrest the people at midnight. Some of those people have to go for a month. Some of them come back sick, and some of them die. Some of them who are lucky can go back to their village, and some of them who are not lucky die on the way." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M. 25), forcibly relocated village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

In the mountains of Toungoo District where roads are rare, and the ones that do exist are only usable in the dry season, thousands of porters are used by the SPDC to keep its camps supplied and to carry supplies for its operational columns. Most of the porters are demanded through written orders sent out by officers at Army camps or at meetings organised by SPDC officers. Porters demanded in this way are most often for the specific purpose of carrying rations and other supplies to the various camps along the roads or to camps up in the hills. The monthly or bimonthly rations are brought up as far as the Army camps at Kler Lah, Kaw Thay Der or Than Daung Gyi by truck. The rations are then put into baskets and villagers are forced to carry them to the camps. In the dry season, the trucks may go as far as Bu Sah Kee on the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road or to the border with Karenni State on the Kler Lah-Mawchi road, but villagers are still forced to go with the trucks to load and unload them. In the rainy season the SPDC Army relies almost entirely on villagers carrying its supplies on their backs. Resupplying the camps often requires large numbers of porters. Sometimes as many as one hundred or more villagers are forced to carry supplies down the Bu Sah Kee and Mawchi roads. The frequency at which the villagers are forced to porter loads for the SPDC makes it exceedingly difficult for many of them

to tend to the daily needs of their families. While the majority of villages are required to send porters on an average of once a month, there are some villages that must go as often as two or three times a month. Many villagers have spoken of returning from portering one day, only to have to go again on the following day, and yet again a few days after that. There have been cases where villagers have returned home from an extended stint of portering only to find their families, dependant upon them for food, in poor health, or in some cases already dead.

"I have been to carry a load many times. There has not been less than twenty times. I have gone to carry a load everywhere to the east of the Khoh Loh [River]. If they came to a village, they would threaten the villagers and torture the villagers. I have seen them shoot some of the villagers dead, and sometimes if they could arrest people, they would wrap their heads [with a tarpaulin] and torture them by pouring water on them [on their heads]. Some of them [SPDC] would steal or destroy the people's things. If they were injured or if their porters were injured, they would force the people [villagers] to carry the victim and swear at and hit those people with a stick. All of these things stick in my brain. I can never forget about these things." - "Saw Moo" (M, 60), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #71, 7/2002)

"In the beginning of 2002, the Deputy Battalion Commander of Infantry Battalion #264, Min Thaw, told us [to go and porter] for the first time [that year] on March 10th 2002. We had to carry our loads to Tha Aye Hta. On the 11th of March 2002, they told us to go and carry to Tha Aye Hta again. There were eighteen people who had to go and carry. Also on March 12th 2002, they told us to carry to Tha Aye Hta. There were eleven people who had to carry. On March 14th 2002, they told us to go and carry to Tha Aye Hta again. They demanded six people from xxxx [village]. On March 15th 2002, they told us to go and carry to Tha Aye Hta again. [This time] there were twelve people who had to go and carry. Then on April 8th 2002, they told the xxxx villagers to go and cut the bushes [from beside the road] between Kaw Thay Der and Klay Soe Kee. There were 25 people who had to go." - "Saw Ka Neh" (M, 46), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #61, 4/02)

"We have to go [as porters] two or three times per month. Sometimes they demand five or six people and sometimes two or three people. We always have to go. I had to go and carry in July [2002]. I had to go on the 17th, on the 19th, and on the 20th." - "Saw Maung" (M, 26), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #135, 12/02)

"I had to go and carry a load on March 12th, 2002 and again on March 18th, 2002. I had to carry their rice; it weighed about 15 viss [25 kgs. / 54 lbs.]. We had to carry our own food. There were 175 people who had to go." - "Saw Eh Kaw Htoo" (M, 25), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #74, 7/02)

"On March 18th 2002, I had to carry a load from Kler Lah to Naw Soe. They forced us to carry their rice. They wanted everybody [from the village] to go, but we only went if we could. In fact, they wanted everyone in the house to go. If there were two people in the house, then those two people had to go; if there were three people in the house, then all three people had to go. After I came back from carrying the load for the SPDC, I saw that my family faced a food problem. They were sick and moaning on the bed." - "Saw Ghee Soe" (M, 35), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #54, 4/02)

"I do not know how many times I have had to carry over the last two years. I have had to carry all year, including during the rainy season." - "Naw Than Wah" (F, 38), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #9, 11/00)

"In 2000 we had to go and carry many times. [In 2001] we had to carry about four or five times. In 2002 we haven't had to go and carry yet. ... Sometimes we had to walk in the dark, so sometimes we laughed and sometimes we cried."
- "Naw Si Si Paw" (F, 65), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #99, 1/02)

In Kler Lah village tract (which includes Kler Lah village, a relocation site around it and several villages) there has developed a system wherein porter fees are paid to the village tract authorities to hire people to go for portering and other forced labour in place of the villagers demanded by the Army. The Army issues demands to the Kler Lah Village Tract Peace and Development Council (PDC) every month stipulating how many villagers they need to go for portering and other forms of forced labour. The village tract authorities are then given the task of recruiting villagers for the work. The village tract authorities, however, know that the villagers do not want to go and will be slow in complying, so they pay labour agents in Toungoo town to provide people to fill the demands. The Village Tract PDC then sends out monthly orders to the villages to pay their share of the costs [see Order #22 in Appendix C]. Although no one asks how the labour agents get these people, interviews by KHRG in the past have indicated that while some may be itinerant labourers, others are travellers who have been 'shanghaied' or young men who have been promised jobs and are then handed over to the police or the Army for money. The Village Tract PDC officials are not above inflating the fees

to enrich themselves. The village heads then divide the amount of money assigned to them among the households in the village. Villagers who are unable to pay the fees, must go themselves. Other villages outside Kler Lah village tract are not a part of this system, although many of them also try to hire itinerant labourers to go in their place. This allows the villagers to avoid the dangers associated with portering and to spend more time in their fields and hopefully produce more food for their families. The labourers that the villagers hire are commonly Burmese civilians from the larger villages and towns such as Toungoo and Zayatkyi in the west of the district. The price for hiring these labourers, like everything else in Toungoo District, is increasing. The costs associated with this are approaching the point where the villagers will no longer be able to afford hiring itinerant labourers, at which time the villagers must go themselves and porter.

"They called for porters, but we did not dare to go. We had to hire [the labourers to go in our place], but they [the villagers] couldn't pay the money. This is a heavy thing [problem] for the village head. We hired the people, but afterwards, they [hired labourers] came back to ask for their money. It is difficult. We don't know what we are going to do in the future." - "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)

"If we couldn't go [for portering], we would have to hire people. Before, we had to pay 5,000 Kyat, but now we have to pay 7,000 Kyat." - "Saw Hser Moo" (M, 29), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #51, 3/02)

"This year, in 2002, the SPDC told us that they weren't going to tell us to go and porter anymore, but they only say that. They still force us to work. They still order us. If we don't go, they say that we must either hire people [to go in their place] or give them money. They demand money from us like that. They said that we have to help them, and if we don't help them, they will not allow us to work in our own place [fields and plantations] anymore." - "Saw No Poh" (M, 49), village head from M— village, Than Daung township (Interview #159, 3/02)

Villagers who must go to carry rations or other supplies to the various Army camps usually have to go for one or two days. Village heads send villagers to go as porters by rotation so that the labour is spread throughout the village. They are usually expected to bring their own food for this period. It is usually men who go as porters, but sometimes when a husband is not free, his wife will have to go. In smaller villages the elderly and children also have to go because there are not enough people to make up the rotation. Women are less likely to be beaten by

the soldiers while portering, but there is the serious risk of rape if the portering lasts for longer than a day. When women must go as porters they must also make a decision as to whether to take their children along or to leave them at home where they may go hungry. Some women have been forced to go while being pregnant or to leave children behind who are still breast feeding. Elderly villagers as old as seventy years of age have also been taken as porters by the SPDC.

go while being pregnant or to who are still breast feeding. I as seventy years of age have porters by the SPDC.

"They forced us on the 15th [of July, 2002]. They told everyone to go. There are only nine families and we all had to go. We have to go to Than Daung Gyi and come back; we have to go to village.

Day Loh [Toh]

and come back.

Even if it is dark

we have to go.

We can't take a

rest; we have to

come back and

go again. We

don't even have

time to eat rice.

The two oldest

people who had

to go were both

(33 kgs. / 72 lbs.). It can take several days, especially in the rainy season, to walk to Bu Sah Kee. During that time, the children must endure the cold, insects, rain and poor food just as the adults do. Children are also not excepted when the porters are forced to walk in front of the soldiers as human minesweepers. Villagers have told KHRG researchers that they have seen children as young as twelve having to do this. Many SPDC officers do not want children as porters, but this is usually more because a child cannot carry

Date: 12-3-02

: Chairperson xxxx village

Subject: Informing [you] to carry rations

Regarding the above subject, village females/ village males from the Elder's village must take responsibility for transporting 30 sacks of rice, and must finishing carrying and delivering [them] on 15-3-02. If [they] don't come to carry by 15-3-02, the village females/ village males from the Elder's village are not allowed to come to Bawgali and must move quickly from the villages where [they] are now staying, you are hereby warned and informed.

[Sd.]

Order #3: This order carries a clear threat that if the porters are not sent, the village will be relocated and the villagers will no longer be allowed to come to the main market village of the region. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #3 in Appendix D.]

as much as an adult than out of concern for the child's welfare. Most officers have to get somewhere by a certain time and do not care how it is done. When there are not enough ablebodied adults available, then children will do. Some parents are forced to send their children when they are already busy doing other forced labour, or have to spend the time in the fields.

70 years old. The youngest person was eight years old; the other [one] was nine years old." - "Saw A'Pay Wah" (M, 38), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #129, 7/02)

"Even when you are fifty or sixty years old you must still carry. If we say that we can't carry, the SPDC threatens us. I am old, but they still demand that I must carry a load for them. My health is not so good now." - "Naw Mu Ko" (F, 60), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #8, 11/00)

Q: "Have you ever seen any pregnant women who had to go and carry a load?"

A: "Yes, I have seen it once. It was in 1999." - "Saw Poh Law" (M, 36), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #42, 1/02)

Children as young as eight, boys and girls, are forced to porter loads for the SPDC, especially along the Bu Sah Kee road. Most children are forced to carry loads of about 10 *viss* (16 kgs. / 36 lbs.). Some villagers, however, claim that they have seen children as young as 15 years old carry loads up to 20 *viss*

"The youngest people [who were forced to porter] were about twelve or thirteen years old." - "Saw Poh Law" (M, 36), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #42, 1/02)

"My son goes to porter; he is fifteen years old. He has to start at Kler Lah and then go to Naw Soe. He has to carry their rice; it weighs 20 viss [33 kgs. / 72 lbs.]." - "Naw Mu Ha" (F, 46), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #62, 4/02)

"I am thirteen years old. I had to go and carry [a load] to Day Loh Toh. I had to carry a very heavy load. I had to carry one big tin of rice [13 kgs. / 28 lbs.]." - "Saw Peh Yah" (M, 13), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #101, 1/02)

"[The youngest was] about thirteen or fourteen years old. When they forced them to carry [their loads], the children couldn't walk." - "Naw Wee Wee" (F, 51), villager from H— village, Tantabin township (Interview #79, 4/01)

"I had to go and carry a load on March 18th 2002. They forced us to carry their rice. I had to carry ten viss [16 kgs. / 36 lbs.] of rice. The youngest person who had to carry a load was twelve years old. We began to carry our loads from Kler Lah [and took them] to Naw Soe [Army] camp. It took us three days to go there. We had to take our own food, and we couldn't sleep well because it was cold and the insects were biting us." - "Naw Meh Nay Say" (F, 17), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #63, 4/02)

"On March 12th 2002 I had to carry rice. They forced everyone in the village. It weighed ten viss [16 kgs. / 36 lbs.]. I had to carry it from Kler Lah to Naw Soe; it took me three days. We couldn't sleep well; the insects were biting us. When we were carrying the loads, the SPDC forced me to walk in the front [of the soldiers] where it is dangerous. I was not happy and I was crying. I have been to carry five times now." - "Naw Kyi Koh" (F, 12), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #64, 4/02)

"Some [of the porters] were as young as thirteen year old. My daughter is thirteen and she had to go. If there were not enough people, they would have to go and fill the [empty] places." - "Naw Than Wah" (F, 38), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #9, 11/00)

When the SPDC wants porters the villagers have no choice but to send people. The SPDC uses the threat of relocation to guarantee that the villagers will comply [see Order #3]. Villagers often say that they 'cannot stay without going' to porter, which means that their village will be relocated if they do not go. Other threats imply that the soldiers will come to the village and burn it down or shoot small arms or mortars into the village. Village heads are sent orders containing bullets, chillies or charcoal when demands for porters have gone unanswered. These symbolise that the soldiers will either shoot the villagers, make things 'hot', or burn down the village if the porters are not sent. While this does not happen often, it has happened often enough that villagers know it is a possibility.

"We have to go and porter regularly. They wrote a letter to us, but the people didn't dare to go. Then they wrote another letter and sent it with two chillies [symbolising that the SPDC will 'heat things up' if their demands are not met]. They said that if we didn't go to porter, they would not allow us to stay in xxxx [village] or Kler Lah; they would not allow us to go and buy food in Kler Lah. They told us that we would have to go and stay very far away. They threaten us with many things. They said that they would come and [plant] landmines in the village, around the village, and on the main path. We were very

afraid, so we had to go and carry. We had to go and carry 30 sacks of rice. There were over 70 people who had to go and carry them from our village; even the children, women, and old people had to go. ... We have to go and carry two or three times per month. Last month [February, 2002] we had to go on the 19th or the 20th. Recently, we also had to go and carry on March 18th [2002]."-"Saw Pa Thaw" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #114, 3/02)

"There is no one who is willing to go and carry. We get tired when we have to go and carry. We have to go and carry even though we don't want to, because they overpower us. We can't stay [in the village] without going. We have to give them whatever they want." - "Saw Htun Aye" (M, 40), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #50, 3/02)

"We can't stay without going. We live under their control. If we don't go or if they have a problem we are afraid that they will make problems for us. We do not go willingly." - "Saw Dah Dah" (M, 68), forcibly relocated former village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #115, 3/02)

Civilians who own vehicles in some of the bigger villages and towns in Toungoo District, such as Kler Lah, New Than Daung, Than Daung Gyi and Leit Tho act as a taxi service by transporting people and goods along the roads in the area in their 2-ton trucks or pickup trucks. Many of these owners have formed 'vehicle associations' to better organise their services. In the dry season the SPDC often orders these vehicle associations to haul supplies to SPDC Army camps along the roads. The road to Bu Sah Kee is particularly treacherous and several trucks have overturned on the road, killing or injuring the driver and passengers. The SPDC rarely provides compensation for the owner/driver, the passengers, who are often villagers conscripted by the SPDC to load and unload the truck, or for the cost of repairs to the vehicle. On April 10th and 14th 2004, the SPDC Operations Commander at Kler Lah ordered the villagers' trucks to carry supplies for the Army to the camps along the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road. On both dates trucks overturned along the way. One villager was injured and two were killed in these accidents. Some vehicle owners have had to haul things for the Army for two or three weeks at a time, during which time the owners received no income from their usual routes. Vehicle owners who do not comply with the demands of the SPDC risk having their driver's license or their vehicle permits taken away, effectively taking their livelihood away from them.

"I drive from xxxx to Kler Lah and Kaw Thay Der. On the way, I would often see trouble; sometimes IB #30 would requisition my car to carry soldiers from Pa Leh Wah to Kler Lah. ... I have had to use my car to carry for them sometimes from Kler Lah to Bu Sah Kee. They would make me take their rations for them. Yesterday I had to carry rations to Pa Leh Wah for them. ... Sometimes they would pay the fare, but most of the time they didn't." - "Saw Tha Say" (M, 59), villager from xxxx (Interview #11, 11/00)

"The Burmese Army from Kler Lah, Kaw Thay Der, 13 Miles camp and Pya Sakan usually use the villagers' cars. They don't use their own cars. If they need a car, they use the villagers' cars. They demand one car for two weeks or three weeks. During the hot season when they repair the car road, they tell the cars to follow the bulldozer." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

On occasion, the villagers are still forced to porter loads for the SPDC regardless of whether they have paid the fees or not. Regularly paying the fees allows the villagers to avoid the customary monthly portering, however, from time to time the SPDC calls the villagers to perform what they refer to as 'emergency' portering. This is basically ad hoc portering demanded by the SPDC as the situation commands. An example of this would be the villagers being ordered to carry a stated amount of rice to a local SPDC Army camp so as to create a stockpile prior to the commencement of the wet season. On December 20th 2003, Operations Command #1, Southern Command, Commander Khin Maung Oo at Kler Lah ordered 200 villagers from Kler Lah, 70 from Kaw Soe Koh, 20 from Wa Tho Koh, 15 from Ler Koh, 20 from Maw Pa Der, 20 from Ku Plaw Der, 60 from Peh Kaw Der, 20 from Maw Ko Der, and 20 villagers from Der Doh to carry rations from Kler Lah to Tha Ave Hta and then to Pi Mu Koh. In all, 445 villagers had to porter along the Toungoo-Mawchi road on this occasion. In January 2004, IB #92 ordered villagers from five villages to carry rations from Ker Weh village to Ler Ghee Koh Der Kah village. On another occasion during January, the same battalion rounded up 75 villagers from two other villages and forced them to porter Army rations from Than Daung town to Kler Per Hti village. On April 19th 2004, SPDC soldiers from LIB #439 ordered 25 men and 65 women from Klaw Mi Der village to carry rations from Pa Leh Wah village to Klaw Mi Der. The next day another 60 villagers from the same village were ordered to carry supplies along the same route.

"They demand 1,200 Kyat each month from each house for the porter fees. They are demanding but we still have to go [and carry their loads]. We have to send the porter fees to Kler Lah. If we do not pay, they said that they would move our village." - "Saw Su Wah Lay" (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #28, 7/01)

"It is worse now in 2002, because even though we have to go for loh ah pay, we also have to pay money. When they demand the money they don't say that it is for loh ah pay, they say that it is for the porters. If they can't call us [to go and porter], they just come and arrest us by force." - "Saw Nay Paw Bee" (M, 28), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #108, 3/02)

The form of portering which villagers fear most is called 'operations portering'. Villagers cannot pay their way out of this form of portering. This type of portering often involves villagers carrying supplies for SPDC soldiers involved in operations in the area. Sometimes the operation may be a simple patrol through the area lasting a day or two and where the soldiers often release the villagers at the next village, or it may be a sweep through an area and taking up to several weeks. Demands for villagers to go for this type of portering happen once a month or so, but may happen at any time. Orders for this type of portering usually go through the village head, but if the Army cannot get enough people this way, or if they need them immediately, they go and capture villagers in the village and in the surrounding fields and plantations. If villagers find out that the Army is coming to take them for this kind of portering, they often flee to avoid having to go. Villagers have been shot for fleeing soldiers ordered to round up the villagers. Villagers who come in reply to a written order are told to bring their own food and have time to prepare, but villagers who are captured in the village or in the fields are usually taken as is, without the opportunity to take any food or change their clothes. Either way, the villagers are often taken for longer than they were originally told, so they run out of rice and must either go hungry or beg for some rotten rice from the soldiers.

"Whenever they are travelling [going to the frontline], they [the porters] have to carry a long way. One time when IB #75 was travelling, they took the porters for two months." - "Saw Keh Su" (M, 50), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #30, 4/02)

"When they forced us, they didn't tell us how many days we had to go for. Sometimes they told us, 'Come with us for a little while.' But we had to go for many days until we ran out of food and were starving. They didn't like to give us rice and if they did give any to us, they would give us the rotten rice." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 18), villager from K—village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

"They told us that we only had to go for two or three days, so we only took enough food for two or three days. Sometimes we would have to go for more than twenty days. When we didn't have any more food they wouldn't let us come back [to the village]. They didn't give us any food and we had to suffer like that." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 18), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

"If they [SPDC] travel for longer, they feed the people [porters] once a day. If the situation [the terrain over which they must carry their loads] is bad, they will let us drink, but if the situation is good, they will not give us a drink. The water is not clean." - "Saw Htoo Klih" (M, 48), forcibly relocated village head from K—village, Than Daung township (Interview #180, 3/02)

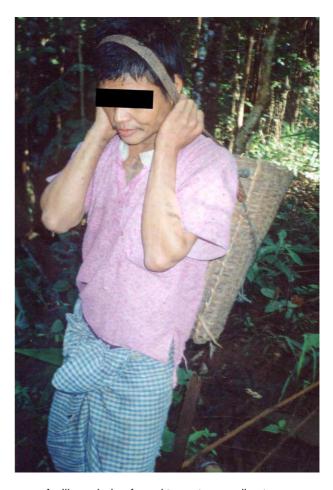
The conditions which villagers experience while portering very much depends on the commander of the unit they have to porter for and on the type of portering they are being forced to perform. Some of the more humane commanders may actually look after the porters and see that they are given some food and are not beaten. This is, however, the exception; most commanders do not care what happens to the porters as long as they reach their objective at the right time. Villagers who must carry the monthly rations up to the Army camps often only have to go for a day or two. The soldiers are not under as much pressure to get where they need to go and so the villagers are not forced to move as quick nor are they beaten as often for not being able to keep up. The loads are also often not as heavy as for 'operations porters'. The 'operations porters' must carry heavier loads over much longer distances for longer periods of time. They are often fed very little food and must sleep out in the open with only the clothes on their backs for protection, even in the rainy season. The bamboo or rattan straps dig into their shoulders and the bottoms of the baskets cause open wounds from rubbing against their lower backs. This debilitates the porters who find it more and more difficult to carry their loads. Rather than receive sympathy from the soldiers, they are often beaten with fists and rifle butts, and kicked for not being able to keep up. Because they are on a military operation, the soldiers are more on edge and are often under pressure to get to the right place at the right time, so the porters must walk faster and are rarely given any rest during the day and very little food or water. Villagers who have been forced to porter loads for the SPDC told KHRG researchers that on one occasion, soldiers from LIB #439 threatened to inject them with an overdose of methamphetamines should they be unable to carry their loads or if they delayed the column. At night the villagers are allowed to sleep, although they are usually kept together in one place and guarded so that they will not try to escape.

"In the wet season, they forced the villagers to carry their loads in the rain. The women and children also had to go. They didn't give us any rice to eat and sometimes we had to sleep on the road where the insects would bite and sting us. They didn't come and look for us to bring us rice to eat. ... Sometimes we could not eat rice so we were hungry and thirsty and we had many tears."

- "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 18), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

"When we go to carry, if we ask for something to eat then they will feed us. If we do not ask, then they will not feed us. Their [the porters] stomachs are in pain and they are hungry. Some of the porters dare to ask them for food, so they feed them, but it is never enough. We cannot eat enough like we eat at home. For water, they cut the bamboo to make a cup and give us one cup each. It is only a small cup." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), forcibly relocated village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"They weren't nice to us. Sometimes they caused us pain. I remember when Major Ngai Htun, Major Thein Htway Aung, and Sergeant Zaw Yeh from IB #26 beat me at Mwee Loh village. I couldn't count how many times. My whole body hurt. They beat us because we couldn't walk [any further]." - "Saw Maung Gyi" (M, 43), villager from P— village, Tantabin township (Interview #94, 4/01)



A villager being forced to porter supplies to an outlying SPDC Army camp. [KHRG]

"We have to go and carry, and we have to go and sleep in the rain a lot. We can't eat very well; we only have fishpaste to eat, but they [SPDC] still come and demand food from us." - "Naw Da" (F, 43), forcibly relocated villager from K—village, Than Daung township (Interview #179, 3/02)

"They forced me to go with them to Si Kheh Der and then Play Hsa Loh. I have had to go with them many times. I have had to carry a load six or seven times. They didn't pay me. If we got tired and could not walk they would hit us. They punched people and kicked people in the buttocks. We took our own food for three days, but sometimes we have to carry the loads for the whole week. When we have no more food, they give us some, but it is never enough."-"Saw Aung Htwe" (M, 41), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #44, 1/02)

"They hit the people who we hired to go and carry [itinerant labourers]. If they couldn't keep up, they were hit. They [SPDC] would hit their calves with a cane and pound their heads with a G2 [assault rifle] in front of me." - "Saw Htoo Klih" (M, 48), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #180, 3/02)

"I went to carry to Bu Sah Kee. I started from Kaw Thay Der. I had to carry about 15 viss [25 kgs./54 lbs.]. I had to take my own food. I took enough for three days, but sometimes it took six days, so we didn't have enough food and they didn't feed us. We had to stay hungry. If we couldn't climb the mountain, they kicked our buttocks and hit us with their guns. ... They even forced us to walk in front." - "Saw K'Paw" (M, 46), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #106, 3/02)

"When I portered to Bu Sah Kee with LIB #439, I was sick on the way so they [SPDC] said to me, 'If you make problems for us on the way, we will inject you with the medicine [methamphetamines] to kill you. We must continue our journey, so we will kill you if we have to wait for you." - "Naw Nay Moo" (F, 30), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #146, 11/00)

"If we could not carry the load, they would scold us and call us 'dogs' and 'pigs' and slap our faces and punch people. We could not carry the load, but they forced us to carry the load. Some of the old people could not carry the load, but they had to carry the load. If they could not carry the load, the SPDC slapped the sides of their heads and called them dogs or pigs. Then they forced them to carry [their loads] even though they could not carry [them]. They slapped one of the women in the side of the head. She was seventy years old. Some people had to carry loads that weighed

more than 20 viss [32 kgs. / 72 lbs.]. If those people could not carry their loads, they [SPDC] would hit them with the butts of their guns." - "Naw Pu Htoo Po" (F, 18), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #95, 4/01)

"They didn't feed us; we had to take our own food. If they [SPDC] didn't have any food, they would come and eat our food. We did not dare to say anything when they ate our food. When we didn't have any more food, we would have to go and ask them for some food, but when we would go and ask them, they would hit us." - "Saw Pa Thaw" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #114, 3/02)

The loads in the baskets which villagers are forced to carry vary, but they can include rations for the soldiers, cooking pots, small arms ammunition, mortar shells and medicine. Along the way, soldiers sometimes add their backpacks and boots to the loads. Chickens, rice, vegetables, fruit or whatever else the soldiers loot from villages and fields are also added to the baskets. The loads which the villagers are forced to carry are often very heavy, especially when carried over long distances. In some cases villagers have said that men have been forced to carry weights of up to 30 viss (49 kgs. / 108 lbs.), while the women have been required to carry as much as 20 viss (33 kgs. / 72 lbs.). Loads of this weight, however, are rare, more commonly the average weight that the men are forced to carry is closer to 20 viss (33 kgs. / 72 lbs.). The baskets in which the loads are carried in are usually made of woven bamboo or cane with straps of shaved bamboo or rough burlap. Villagers often arrive back in their villages with bruises, abrasions and festering open wounds from where the straps dug into their shoulders or where the bottoms of the baskets rubbed against their lower backs.

"The SPDC forces us to carry their loads, so we have to carry them. If we don't they will oppress us. We have to carry their rice, bread, cigars, and shrimp paste. Some people have to carry as much as 15 viss [25 kgs. / 54 lbs.]." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), forcibly relocated village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"Each man had to carry twenty to thirty viss [33 – 49 kgs. / 72 – 108 lbs.]. They would tell the women to carry eighteen to twenty viss [29 - 33 kgs. / 65 - 72 lbs.]." - "Saw Ler Thoo" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #10, 11/00)

"The heaviest loads that I had to carry were seventeen to twenty viss [28 – 33 kgs. / 61 – 72 lbs.]." - "Naw Than Wah" (F, 38), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #9, 11/00)

"We had to carry from xxxx [village] to zzzz [village], then to the Klay Loh River, and to yyyy [village]. We had to go for two weeks. Sometimes it weighed 20 viss [32 kgs. / 72 lbs.], and sometimes it weighed over 20 viss, but the usual weight was 18 viss [29 kgs. / 65 lbs.]." - "Saw Pa Thaw" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #114, 3/02)

Many villagers become ill as a direct result of the conditions that they confront while portering. The combination of the lack of food, shelter, and healthcare, along with the beatings dealt out by the soldiers accompanying them, and the sheer exhaustion from hauling such heavy loads all take their toll on the bodies of those subjected to such conditions and makes them very prone to illness. Porters are rarely given medicine by the soldiers when they become ill. The soldiers either claim that there is no medicine, or that the medicine that they have is for use by the soldiers only. The villagers must simply continue on and suffer in silence. The alternative would be to be left behind to fend for themselves in the forest. Some porters have been left behind, alone beside the path when they are too weak to continue on. In their weakened state, many porters die after being left like this. Many villagers arrive back from long periods of portering too exhausted or ill to work their fields for days afterward.

"I couldn't climb the mountain anymore. They [SPDC] told me, 'You can't stop, you have to keep going. If you don't climb the mountain, I will kill you'. [Then] they threatened me with a knife. If the porters can't carry anymore, they [SPDC] don't want to give them medicine. [The soldiers

told them], 'If you are going to die, then die; if you are going to live, then live. That is your duty.' They don't release them [the sick porters], they still make them carry. They force them to carry at least one backpack or other things [that they are still able to carry]." - "Saw Heh Kay Law" (M, 32), village secretary from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #134, 12/02)

"Before, there have been some people who have been injured. Some of them got sick and died. There have been one or two women who had little babies who died [because their mothers were forced to go and porter]. I [also] know some of them [villagers] who have had their legs blown off." - "Saw Hser Moo" (M, 29), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #51, 3/02)

"I can't count anymore. There must have been 100 times. In the past, I followed IB #59. I followed them for nearly one month. I couldn't walk anymore. They didn't feed me and they didn't give me any water to drink. I was sick and I had to try to come back [to the village] on my hands and knees. I had to walk like a cow. When I arrived back home, I was sick and I had to treat myself for three months." - "Saw Zaw Oo" (M, 47), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #103, 3/02)

"They didn't look after us. When we would ask them for medicine, they would tell us, 'there is no medicine'. They would say, 'we cannot give it to you'. When we came back, we were only skin and bone. Our clothes looked old [torn and

They were afraid that we would step on a landmine ...

"During 2001 when I went to porter, they came and arrested us by force. They came and arrested the whole village by force. There were 23 people who had to go and carry. They took us for the whole week. [We had to carry] about 15 viss [25 kgs. / 54 lbs.]. They said that two men would carry one sack of rice [50 kgs / 110 lbs], but in the end one man had to carry a sack of rice [on his own]. When we went to carry to Bu Sah Kee, we had no rice to eat. Even though we walked in the water, we couldn't drink the water. We carried rice, but we couldn't eat any rice. We walked in the water, but we couldn't drink any. They told us not to walk on the riverbank. They were afraid that we would step on a landmine, so they told us to walk in the water. They only fed us when we arrived at their Army camp, but they didn't feed us enough. When we were walking, we had to walk for the whole day. We couldn't eat, so we couldn't carry anymore [they were too weak to carry any longer]. They would say to us, 'My penis weighs this much, why can't you carry it?' They don't talk to us well. They wanted to hit us with a stick. They wouldn't give any medicine. They would say, 'You are lazy. You are just pretending to be like that.' They wanted to hit us; they accused us [of lying]. One time in the past when I was the village head, I got an injury on my leg [when he was forced to porter to Bu Sah Kee]. When we arrived to Kaw Thay Der I asked permission to take a rest. At the same time a Burmese porter escaped. They [SPDC] said 'This is happening because of you. This time we will be lenient towards you, but if it happens again, we will shoot you dead'. They wanted to hit me with a stick." - "Saw Pa Tray" (M, 52), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #111, 3/02)

dirty]; it looked like we had come out of the ground." - "Saw Than Htoo" (M, 37), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #116, 3/02)

"When we go to porter, they guard us with their guns, and when we go to the toilet, they guard us with their guns. They don't allow the villagers to take a rest if they get tired. Some people get sick; sometimes they give them medicine and sometimes they don't give them medicine. If the people get really sick, they leave them on the path." - "Saw Htoo Wee" (M, 52), forcibly relocated village head from L— village, Than Daung township (Interview #186, 10/02)

"There are some people who get sick. Some of them can't suffer anymore and escape; some of them can't walk anymore and they are left behind." - "Saw Ba Kyu" (M, ?), internally displaced villager from M— village, Than Daung township (Interview #143, 10/00)

SPDC soldiers usually force the porters to walk at intervals between every few soldiers on the paths. One reason for this is because it makes it difficult for the porters to flee. Porters have been shot by the soldiers while trying to flee. The other reason is that because the villagers are interspersed among the soldiers, it makes it difficult for the KNLA to ambush the column without hitting the villagers. Porters have also been forced to walk in front of the soldiers to

act as human minesweepers. Many porters have lost their limbs or their lives from landmines intended the SPDC [see soldiers 'Landmines']. This is especially true of villagers forced to porter supplies down the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road. This road has been heavily mined for years. The SPDC knows this, but they continue to send villagers down the road in front of their own troops. Many villagers have been killed or maimed while portering along this road. Porters are often caught in the middle when ambushes occur

and some have been cut down in the crossfire. Some porters have been wounded and killed during ambushes by stepping on landmines placed beside the path while seeking cover from the gunfire. Wounded porters are sometimes left behind by the soldiers. The porter's family is almost never offered compensation when he or she dies or is wounded while portering for the SPDC. Some SPDC units have ordered villagers to carry supplies to their camps without soldiers accompanying them. If the villagers do not arrive with the proper loads, they will be accused of giving the missing items to the KNU and probably arrested and beaten as well as fined for the missing items. In this way the soldiers still get the supplies sent, but they do not have to risk being ambushed or stepping on any landmines.

"I have had to carry for IB #59 since 1986. I had to carry from Kler Lah to Bu Sah Kee. We had to carry about 20 viss [33 kgs. / 72 lbs.]. If we were tired we would ask for water and then they would point the barrels of their guns at us. They drove us to walk quickly. If we could not keep up, they would kick us. They didn't treat us well. When we had to go and carry, we didn't have a place to sleep. It would rain and we would not be able to sleep well. The porters who had to go were Karen people. They [SPDC] hit them. They forced us to walk in front. They arrested the villagers in Bu Sah Kee, dug a hole and kept us in the hole. They tortured us in many ways. They tortured us and hit us. We were afraid of them. We had

<u>Stamp:</u> To:

Village Peace and Development Council yyyy tract

Chairperson/ secretary xxxx village

Date: 16-8-01

Subject: To pay donation money for the matter of the injured and dead servants that were hired

The villages from *yyyy* village tract hired 2 servant people whose names are included below. One died and one stepped on a landmine and was injured, so the villagers from every village are to give donation money commensurate with your goodwill and the fund money that can be collected. Come to pay it to *yyyy* VPDC, you are informed.

- (1) Soe Tin, Father: U Aung Shein
- (2) Aung Gu, Father U Nyunt
- Dead
- Stepped on landmine

[Sd.]

(for) <u>Stamp:</u> Chairperson
Village Peace and Development Council
yyyy tract

Order #4: When itinerant labourers are wounded/ killed while performing forced labour, it is the villagers, not the SPDC who are expected to compensate their families. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #4 in Appendix D.]

to be afraid of them when we stayed in the village and when we travelled on the paths. Sometimes they took us for a week, sometimes they took us for a month." - "Saw Ti Mi" (M, 30), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #161, 3/02)

"When they come here they force us to go and carry [their loads]. There have been some of the people who have died on the way. There are some of the people who have had their legs blown off. Some of the people have to face a problem with food. They don't have enough food. Sometimes they force us to go and carry even on Sundays so that we can't worship. They force us to do their work and they bully us. We have to go even though we don't dare to go, and we have to do [it] even though we do not dare to do [it]. Before they have forced me to go and build the road; they forced me to walk in front. We had to go in front and the car would follow us. It was only the villagers who would hit the landmines and only the villagers who would face the problems. One of my brothers went to carry because I couldn't go to carry. He hit a landmine when he went to porter and it blew his leg off." -"Naw Paw Eh" (F, 19), forcibly relocated villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 3/02)

"The people have had to carry for them and the people have had to guide them. They forced people to guide them to P— village. When the fighting occurred, they drove all of the people to the battle. We had to carry their rice and their shells and bullets. When we had to carry the loads for them, they didn't give us food or water. They gave us nothing to eat. Sometimes [we had to go for] two days, and sometimes three days, and sometimes one month."-"Saw Khaw" (M, 45), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #35, 1/02)

"They [IB #124] forced us to carry and I was wounded on January 8 [2002]. I was injured on my calf, my heel, a little bit on my head and on my arm. I can't work anymore; people have to carry me. They sent me [to the hospital] with their own car, but they didn't pay for anything, we had to look after ourselves." - "Saw San Pweh" (M, 45), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #117, 3/02)

"I was injured in March 2001; I forget the date. At that time there were nine people who went to carry. There were eight people who were injured out of those nine people. Among those eight people, one of them died. There is also one person who is still in hospital now. I was wounded on my hand, on my leg, and on my buttocks. The people who got small injuries were sent to Taw Oo, and the two or three people who

were injured badly were sent to Mingaladon [Hospital in Rangoon]. They sent us to Than Daung Hospital, and after that they sent us to Mingaladon. They didn't look after us very well, but they did give us 3,000 Kyat each. They didn't take care of us, we had to look after ourselves."
- "Saw Htaw Saw" (M, 58), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #118, 3/02)

"My husband was injured. He was wounded on his hand, his buttocks, and his leg. His leg was broken. He was sent directly to the hospital. They sent him to Than Daung Hospital; they took care of him well. The SPDC said that he got a serious injury, so they gave him 4,035 Kyat. He hasn't healed yet; he can only walk around the house. He can't go far."- "Naw Kloh" (F, 40), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #119, 3/02)

"There was fighting one time in yyyy [village]. When there was fighting, each soldier stayed close to a porter." - "Saw Heh Kay Law" (M, 32), village secretary from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #134, 12/02)

"One of my aunts got a landmine injury; there were no soldiers with her. We are still forced to go [and porter] even when the soldiers do not dare to." - "Naw Paw Htoo Mu" (F, 25), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #12, 11/00)

"I had to go and carry for IB #233. We had to go and carry to yyyy [village]. When we arrived there, they tied us up. They were afraid that we would run away. When we arrived there, we didn't have enough food. We had to starve for two days. If we couldn't carry the loads they kicked us. They forced us to go before them to wipe out the mines in front. They forced us to do many things." - "Saw Pa Thaw" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #114, 3/02)

Burmese regimes have used convict porters for military operations for many years. In the last five years the use of convict porters has grown rapidly. As the Army has expanded it needs more and more porters to keep its frontline camps and units supplied, but in many areas there are not enough villagers to meet the demand. The use of convict porters also helps the SPDC to avoid some of the international criticism against it for its use of forced labour. Many governments look upon convict labour more favourably than civilian forced labour. Anecdotal evidence from convict porters interviewed by KHRG suggests that the SPDC is arresting some people simply to get them into the prisons from where they can be taken to the frontline as porters. Many of the people interviewed have been arrested for very trivial offenses such as possesing illegal lottery tickets,

failure to meet crop quotas, or 'hiding in the dark' (a form of conspiracy charge which can be applied to anyone out after dark, or even in broad daylight). Other people have been arrested for theft or drug offenses, although no evidence was presented against them. The accused are quickly convicted by the SPDC courts and sent to prisons, where they often only spend a few days before being taken out and handed over to the Army. Most of the prisoners are from central Burma. Guilty of their crimes or not, the convicts are still civilians who are being exposed to the dangers of the frontline.

Convicts are treated especially brutally by the SPDC soldiers. The loads that they are forced to carry are often twice the weight that villagers would be forced to carry. Many convicts have said that the loads were so heavy that they needed assistance to stand up

with them. Convicts who are unable to carry the loads are beaten and kicked by the soldiers along the way. Sometimes they have been beaten to death. The SPDC soldiers usually only provide the convicts with a little rice and a thin broth made of beans. Medical help is almost never given to sick or injured convicts. In between portering supplies for the soldiers, the convicts are also forced to work at the Army camps digging trenches, fetching water or making fences around the camp. In Toungoo District they have also been forced to work on the roads, especially the Toungoo-Mawchi road. Convicts have said that they were promised in the prison that their sentences would be reduced or that they would be released if they went as porters. After portering for the Army for a few weeks, it becomes apparent to the porters that they will instead be worked to death, so many flee [For more information see 'Convict Porters: The Brutal Abuse of Prisoners on Burma's Frontlines' (KHRG 2000-06, 20-12-2000].

When they could not suffer any longer, they died ...

"I hit my friend and had to stay [in prison] for two years and six months. They forced me to be a porter. ... I had to carry their shells and a sack of rice. It weighed about 20 viss [33 kgs. / 72 lbs.]. If we could not carry the load, they hit us with the butts of their guns on the backs of our shoulders and our necks. They would not allow us to take a rest. They hit me about seven or eight times. I was sick; I got malaria and gastritis, but they didn't give me any medicine. [I saw] three people die from diseases. They were prisoners. They would say to us, 'you are not sick; you have to carry the load', and they would hit us. Some people died because they were sick and their wounds were inflamed and they had diarrhoea and dysentery. When they could not suffer any longer, they died. ... They only gave us a thin blanket, but we could not sleep properly because it was too cold. We were not allowed to light a fire. There were 150 prisoners from Mandalay prison, and fifty from Myingyan and Meiktila [both in Mandalay Division]. ... They said that [if we ran away] they would give us only rice water to drink if they met us again. They would not give us rice to eat and they would kill us. They would threaten us and say that. I fled on February 2nd 2002, and I arrived here on the 8^{th} . [When I ran away] I took some chick peas and dried fish with me. My legs and my body had become swollen. The malaria that I had was getting worse. If I didn't flee I would have died of disease because they didn't give us any medicine and they forced us unfairly." - "Ko Khin Thein" (M, 20), escaped Burman convict porter from Mandalay, Mandalay Division (Interview #193, 2/02)

Road Projects

"If they are going to repair the Bu Sah Kee road from Kaw Thay Der to Naw Soe, they force the villagers to do the work. The villagers have to go in the morning to clear the road. The villagers have to walk in front, while they [SPDC] walk behind the villagers. They force the villagers to walk on the road and clear it first and later they follow the villagers after they have cleared the landmines." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

Lack of development, coupled with the mountainous terrain has left most parts of Toungoo District accessible only by footpaths. In order to support its increased military presence and to better facilitate its attempts to increase its control over the district as well as southern Karenni State the SPDC has expanded its road network in the district over the past ten years. The roads also function as barriers to the movement of the KNU and KNLA as well as internally displaced villagers. The SPDC plans to connect the roads in Toungoo District with roads in other districts in the near future and construction on some of these roads has already begun. At present there are three main roads that cut through Toungoo District. The main road in the district is the 37 mile (60 km.) all season dirt road from Toungoo to Kler Lah [see Map 3]. At the seven mile point along this road from Toungoo a second all-weather road turns off and heads northeast across the northern part of the district through Leit Tho village to Loikaw in Karenni

State. A third all-weather road branches off at the 13 Mile marker at New Than Daung and heads northeast to Than Daung Gyi. A 5-6 kilometre spur of this road continues on up to Ker Weh village. Farther east on the main road, a rough dirt road branches off at Pa Leh Wah and heads south to the village and SPDC Army camp at Klaw Mi Der. Although this road is not very passable to vehicles, the SPDC still insists that the villagers maintain it and the bridges along it on a regular basis. A few kilometres past Kler Lah the road forks with the main road continuing on to the east to Mawchi in Karenni State, and a southern fork winds 28 miles (45 km.) southeast to Bu Sah Kee village. The Bu Sah Kee road was built between 1995 and 1998 to improve military access to the southeastern part of the district. The road was built entirely by the forced labour of villagers in the area and once it was completed the SPDC set up Army camps all along its length. This road is impassable in the rainy season. There are no bridges along its route and sections of it are washed away every rainy season, so every dry season the villagers must perform forced labour rebuilding the road. In the dry season the Army forces the vehicle owners from Kler Lah and Than Daung Gyi to haul supplies to the camps along the road. The villagers must accompany the trucks to load and off-load the

supplies. In the rainy season the villagers must haul the supplies on their backs from Kaw Thay Der to the same camps.

The SPDC plans to connect the road to Bu Sah Kee with two others coming north from Papun and Nyaunglebin Districts. One road branches

off the Kyauk Kyi-Saw Hta road and heads north to Ler Mu Plaw in Papun District. From there, the SPDC plans to drive the road north to Bu Sah Kee. The other road is intended to come northeast from Ma La Daw in Nyaunglebin District and cut across southeastern Toungoo District to Bu Sah Kee. Most of the work on these roads has been from the south to the north. Progress on both the roads has been slow. The road from Papun District does not go much past Ler Mu Plaw and the road from Ma La Daw in Nyaunglebin District does not extend much past the Nyaunglebin-Toungoo District border.

"[They will build a road] from Bu Sah Kee to Mu Theh and Pwa Ghaw. From what we know, they are going to start building it from there and will build it so that it comes to here [Bu Sah Kee]. From that side it will come from Pwa Ghaw to P'Nah Ay Per Ko and build it step by step. Maybe it will pass through Kay Pu and Si Day." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

The SPDC's road building strategy is to create a network of roads and Army camps from which they can better control the surrounding area. The roads allow the SPDC to better supply its soldiers and to create stockpiles which will keep the soldiers in more remote camps supplied throughout the rainy season. This makes it possible for the SPDC to keep troops stationed in areas which it previously had to withdraw from at the beginning of the rainy season due to the difficulty of keeping them supplied. The roads also enable the SPDC to more rapidly move troops across longer distances as seen by the SPDC offensive along the Karen-Karenni State border at the beginning of 2004. With more and better supplied camps, the SPDC will be able to base more troops in the district and mount more sweeps through the area to hunt down the KNU and the internally

> displaced villagers hiding there. The camps along the roads and patrols the which the S P D С conducts between the camps make roads effective barriers to the movement of the KNU and KNLA. They also make it more difficult for internally displaced villagers to flee



A stretch of the Kaw Thay Der to Bu Sah Kee car road as it was in April 2001, along which thousands of villagers are ordered to porter loads for the SPDC. [KHRG]

or to receive assistance. If the SPDC follows the same tactic that it has used on the Kyauk Kyi-Saw Hta road in Papun District to the south, they will likely landmine the areas along the roads to make them even more difficult to cross.

Much of the SPDC's attention since 1998 has been focused on rebuilding the old colonial-era road from Kler Lah to Mawchi in Karenni State 96 miles (150 km.) away. Construction began on the roads from both ends in 1998 with the intention of meeting at the Karen State–Karenni State border. Every dry

season for four years the SPDC would push the road farther using villagers from Kler Lah as forced labour. Convicts from prisons in central Burma were also brought up to supplement the villagers working on the road. The SPDC did this because the villagers in the villages along the route of the road had all fled to avoid having to work on it. Every rainy season the SPDC would pull back to their camps and wait for the dry season to begin construction again. Previous attempts to build the road had failed due to security problems due to KNLA and Karenni Army (KA) soldiers in the area. To counteract this and consolidate control over the route, the SPDC established camps at regular intervals along the route of the completed stretches of the road. The two halves of the road were finally connected during 2002, although the road did not see much service for the rest of the year. The SPDC Army units on the Karen-Karenni State border that had been overseeing the road construction then pulled back into Tha Aye Hta Army camp for the rainy season. When the rains

finished the Army moved back into the area in 2003 n established permanent camps at Wa Baw Day, Kler Htoo Day and Ler Wah Mu Thwa Koh between Tha Aye Hta and the Karen State border. According to a KHRG field researcher. there are approximately 30 SPDC

[Village] Secretary

To:

Send 5 *loh ah pay* people from Saw *aaaa*'s village to *yyyy* [Army] Camp tomorrow on 3-4-2001 to arrive at 6 o'clock in the morning. [They are] for building the Mawchi vehicle road, to clear the bushes and trees.

* (reply by letter that this has been received)

[Sd.] 2-4-2001 Bo [Commander] bbbb (yyyy camp)

Order #5: A translation of an order demanding forced labour for the construction of the Toungoo-Mawchi car road. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #5 in Appendix D.]

Army soldiers in each of these camps. This road was used extensively by the SPDC to move troops through the area in its 2003-2004 offensive against the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) and simultaneous relocation campaign against the villagers in the southern part of Karenni State.

"Ever since 1999 and 2000, they have been building the [Mawchi] road to the border [of Karenni State]. They went back after they finished building it [sections of it]. They would do that every year. On the Mawchi side, they also worked on it every year. This year, as they were building it [from the Karenni side], coming up step by step, they arrived at the border. The road that they were building from Kler Lah connected with it there. They were going to come and work on it until April [2002], but they couldn't settle

their Army there. They all went back. They even took apart their bridge and took it back with them. They built it with iron [steel]. I don't understand why they did this. It is strange; they never use that road. They have finished making it but they did not settle down [make a camp] there. They settled down near Tha Aye Hta. This year, when they came in the summer, they came and built the bridge, and when they went back they took it with them. They only made the bridge temporarily. They did not make it with concrete. I think that next year they will come and build the road again. When they come they will also build the bridge again, and when they leave they will take it with them again." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG field researcher (Interview #3, 8/02)

"Before, they [SPDC] used to go back to stay in Tha Aye Hta during the raining season, but now because the KnSO [Karenni National Solidarity Organisation] soldiers stay in the Kwa Kee area

Date: 2-4-2001

[in Karenni State], they [SPDC] stay in Wa Baw Day, Ler Wah Moo Thwa Koh, and Kler Htoo Day [in Karen State]. They have only been doing that this year [in 2003]." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

"They hope to build the car road from Kler Lah and Klay Soe Kee to Mawchi [in Karenni State]. It has arrived to Wa Soe; it has arrived to the border of

Kawthoolei and Karenni State. But the road is only passable in the hot season. The cars cannot run in the raining season; they have built it [the road] to be passable only in the hot season. ... They have been building this road since the hot season in 2000. Last year [2000], during the month of May, they were still building the road." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

The bridge at Ler Wah Mu Thwa Koh has been constructed of steel rather than the usual wood and the SPDC dismantled the bridge and took it back with them to Tha Aye Hta. A number of convict porters who had been forced to carry loads along the then-incomplete Toungoo-Mawchi road on the Karenni side escaped to KNU held territory in early 2002 and were interviewed by a KHRG researcher. They stated

that they had seen three other bridges on the Karenni side of the border, one of which had been constructed of steel and is located about 14 miles from Mawchi. It is possible that the construction of the road from Toungoo to Mawchi is not only to support the SPDC's military presence but to also haul ore extracted from the wolfram (tungsten ore) mines around Mawchi. This would be a more direct route to central Burma than the other option which would entail going north to Loikaw and then through Shan State first. The use of steel bridges rather than the usual wooden ones seems to support this because they would be better able to support the heavy weight of the trucks transporting the ore. The section of the road between Mawchi and Kler Lah is still only passable in the dry season, however, and would need to be much improved to enable heavy trucks to use it year-round.

"I started to escape at the iron bridge below Mawchi at 14 Miles [in Karenni State]. I only saw one bridge; it is finished." - "Ko Khin Thein" (M, 20), escaped Burman convict porter from Mandalay, Mandalay Division (Interview #193, 2/02)

"[I fled from] between Mawchi and 14 Miles [in Karenni State] on January 5 2002. There is a bridge there. It is now finished. There are three bridges in all." - "Zaw Aung" (M, 30), escaped Lisu convict porter from xxxx, Kachin State (Interview #194, 2/02)

"I started to flee above Mawchi at 14 Miles [Karenni State] on January 5th 2002. They have finished building the bridge there and now they are continuing to construct the road." - "U Maung Shwe" (M, 28), escaped Burman convict porter from Mandalay, Mandalay Division (Interview #195, 2/02)

Most of the roads in Toungoo District are dry season roads, so at the beginning of each dry season the SPDC forces the villagers in the vicinity to repair the damage done to the roads during the wet season. Even the all-weather road from Toungoo to Kler Lah needs to be maintained. Road repair entails filling in potholes with stones or gravel, rebuilding washed out sections and repairing the bridges. The Operations Command at Kler Lah sends out frequent orders to the villages around Kler Lah to send people to repair sections of the road. The villagers sometimes have to go for several days at a time, during which they must bring their own food and tools. For example, on January 12th 2004, 89 villagers from Kler Lah, Ku Plaw Der, Ler Koh, Wah Toh Koh and Maw Pa Der villages were ordered by the Operations Commander at Kler Lah to repair the Toungoo-Mawchi road. The same officer also ordered another 55 villagers from Peh Kaw Der, Kaw So Ko, Der Doh and Maw Koh Der villages to repair the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road between Naw Soe and Bu Sah Kee. On March 17th 2004, Operations Commander Khin Soe at Kler Lah ordered 102 villagers from Kler Lah, Ler Koh, Ku Plaw Der, Peh Kaw Der, Kaw So Ko, Der Doh and Maw Pah Der villages to work on the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road.

"Since 1995, they have been making the car road from Kaw Thay Der to Bu Sah Kee. They have been making the car road for five or six years already. They repair the car road every year; they repair the road in the dry season. After they finish repairing the car road, they send the rations and military supplies. They send the Army's food, drinks, army supplies, and bullets every year. ... From Ma La Daw [in Nyaunglebin District] they will build a road up to Bu Sah Kee, but it is not

Stamp:

#2 Strategic Operations Command Group Southern Command Headquarters

Southern Command Headquarters #2 Strategic Operations Command Group Letter #xxxx / xx / Oo x Date: Year 2002, March 16th

To:

Chairperson/Secretary xxxx village

Subject: To help, support and fulfil

The people's construction business, Than Daung Thit Group, is right now resurfacing and repairing the vehicle road between Pa Leh Wah and Bawgali Gyi. The villages concerned have to help, support and fulfil their needs, you are hereby informed

[Sd.]

(for) <u>Stamp:</u> Temporary Strategic Operations Commander #2 Strategic Operations Command Group

Order #6: This order demands that the villagers provide forced labour to assist a 'private' construction company with building the road; in effect, this order gives the company the authority to demand forced labour directly from villages, with the backing of the Army. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #6 in Appendix D.]

finished yet." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

Villagers are also ordered to clear the brush from alongside the sides of the roads. This is done to create 'killing zones' along the sides of the roads to make it difficult for the KNLA to stage ambushes or to lay landmines on the roads. Villagers are also ordered to sweep the roads to detect any landmines that may have been placed there. Villagers have been maimed or killed while clearing the brush or sweeping the roads from the landmines. On April 2nd 2002, a 25 year old female villager was a part of a group that had been ordered by an SPDC deputy battalion commander to cut the brush along a stretch of the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road. While doing this, she stepped on one of the landmines just before noon. Her lower left leg was blown off, her right one was mangled, her hands were injured and she was blinded by shrapnel. She died later that day at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. On January 12th 2004, Operations Commander Khin Soe ordered villagers in the Kler Lah area to clear the Toungoo-Mawchi road from Tha Aye Hta to Pi Mu Koh for seven days. Altogether, 176 villagers from Kler Lah, Kaw So Ko, Peh Kaw Der, Maw Ko Der, Der Doh, Maw Pa Der, Ka Plaw Der, Ler Kho and Wah Tho Koh villages had to go. On the same day, SPDC soldiers from IB #124 went to Der Doh village and ordered 12 villagers to clear the road between Tha Aye Hta and Pi Mu Koh. The soldiers threatened to burn down the village and behead the villagers if they did not go. The troops then went to Maw Ko Der and Peh Kaw Der villages and repeated the order. On March 15th 2004, 150 villagers were rounded up in Kler Lah and forced by the Operations Commander in Kler Lah to clear the brush and any landmines along the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road. The villagers had to bring their own tools and food. Luckily, on this occasion no one was killed or injured.

"On April 8th 2002, they ordered us to go and cut the bushes [from beside the car road]. We had to cut the bushes from Kler Lah to Klay Soe Kee. There were 32 people who had to go and cut the bushes. They didn't pay us any wages; we had to work for free." - "Saw Yaw" (M, 25), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #183, 4/02)

"When they forced the Kaw Thay Der villagers to go and cut and clear [the bushes from beside] the road, some people struck [the landmines]. Naw L— was injured by the landmine and she died the following day. She died after the people took her back to the village." - "Saw Pwih" (M, 37), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #52, 4/02)

"Since the SPDC built the road from Bu Sah Kee to Kler Lah, a lot of people have hit the landmines. Their hands and legs have been blown off. Some of them have died." - "Naw Hser Lay" (F, 55), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #15, 4/02)

The SPDC sometimes uses bulldozers to repair the roads and the KNLA often targets the bulldozers to disrupt the SPDC road repair activities. In an effort to deter the KNLA from destroying its bulldozers the SPDC orders villagers to accompany the bulldozers. The people are forced to ride on the bulldozers to keep the KNLA from planting mines to destroy them or to shoot at them. In some instances villagers have

Stamp:

Village Peace and Development Council Than Daung township Bawgali Gyi tract To:

Chairperson/Secretary xxxx village Date: 20-1-02

Subject: Must send loh ah pay to follow the bulldozer

In accordance with the letter of Sergeant *aaaa*, assistant to the IB #39 Deputy Battalion Commander at Bawgali Gyi Army Camp, the Chairperson/Secretary yourself must bring 1 *loh ah pay* person from the Elder's village to Bawgali Gyi monastery for the bulldozer on 21-1-02, at 7 o'clock Monday morning. If *[you]* want to know everything, quickly contact Sergeant *aaaa* at the monastery, you are informed.

[Sd.]

<u>Stamp:</u> (for) Chairperson Village Peace and Development Council Bawgali Gyi tract, Than Daung township

Order #7: To 'follow the bulldozer' means to ride along on the bulldozer in order to deter the KNLA from laying landmines to destroy it. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #7 in Appendix D.

been forced to sleep on or beside the vehicles to keep the KNLA from attacking them in the night. This has not stopped the KNLA, however, and on February 29th 2004, KNLA soldiers attacked the SPDC at Haw Sha Day and destroyed one of their bulldozers. Two SPDC soldiers were wounded as well as two Klay Soe Kee villagers who had been forced to go along to protect the bulldozer. After the fight, the Klay Soe Kee village head, who had also accompanied the bulldozer, was beaten by the SPDC troops.

"When they go with the bulldozer, we have to go with them. They force the villagers who can work, like the young men from Kler Lah and Kaw So Ko to go in front. They have to scrape and plough in front of the bulldozer. There are a lot of people who hit the mines. They force people to go in front and those people get injuries." - "Saw Koh Gyi" (M, 40), village head from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #53, 4/02)

"When we went [to porter], they told us to sit down beside the machine [bulldozer or truck]. Two people had to sit on either side. The people [villagers] did not dare to go, so they went to hire Burmese [labourers] from Taw Oo. We had to pay them 20,000 Kyat each month. We have to collect 700 Kyat from each house. Since [the beginning of] 2002, we have already had to collect money three times." - "Saw Hser Moo" (M, 29), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #51, 3/02)

"They [SPDC] park their trucks on the road and force the villagers to sleep around the truck. It is the villagers from Kaw Thay Der who have to go and guard the trucks the most often. They have to clear the road in the daytime and guard the trucks in the night time." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

Tourism Projects

"If we look back at 1999, we see that there was one group of troops who entered [the area]. They were from Infantry Battalion #124 and came to settle down at Than Daung Gyi. They settled down their battalion there and their aim was to build a resort for the tourists to come and visit. This is why they came and repaired [that place]." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG Field Researcher (Interview 3, 8/02)

During the colonial period, Than Daung Gyi was a hill station used by the British to escape from the heat of the plains in central Burma. It has also become known for the tea leaves that are grown there. Although the township offices were moved to Than Daung Myo Thit (New Than Daung) on the main road long ago, it still remains a reasonable-sized town. The town is only 28 miles from Toungoo and sits atop a 4,000 foot mountain with cool weather all year. The SLORC decided that it would make a good tourist destination and intended to have it ready by Visit Myanmar Year 1996-97. However, the security for the site could not be guaranteed, so the plan had to be shelved. At the beginning of 2000 the plan was revived. In February 2000, Lt. General Win Myint, then Secretary-3 of the SPDC went to Than Daung Gyi along with Hotels and Tourism Minister Major General Saw Lwin and other officials to plan the project. The original goal was to make Than Daung Gyi a tourist destination within one year.

After Win Myint's visit work on the project went ahead, much of it involving the use of forced labour and the relocation of villagers. A new battalion, IB #124, was brought in and set up its headquarters in Than Daung Gyi in 1999. The battalion was assigned the responsibility for securing the area for the project. The then-Southern Regional Command Commander, Major General Tin Aye [now SPDC member and Director of the Military Ordnance Department] ordered the IB #124 Battalion Commander on February 3rd 2000 to relocate the civilians in Sections One, Two, Three, Four and Five of Than Daung Gyi town. IB #124 was to then raze the orchards, plantations and houses in the vacated area so that they could build a new military camp. This camp was named 'Bayinnaung Army Camp'. In addition to being used as a base for IB #124 the camp is a military training school for SPDC officers. No compensation was given to the townspeople for their destroyed orchards, plantations or houses. Instead they were forced to build the Army's camp on the site and housing for the wives and children of the soldiers.

"Before the Bayinnaung Army camp was built, the Ta Pa Ka [Southern Command Headquarters] Commander, Major General Tin Aye, spoke to the IB #124 Battalion Commander at the Than Daung Gyi Army base on February 13, 2000. He ordered that Than Daung Gyi [town] and the area surrounding it that belonged to the villagers, like the orchards and plantations, were to be destroyed. The Ta Pa Ka Commander, Tin Aye, ordered that the civilians must relocate so that the Army could build their camp; a camp for IB #124 and their families. Sections One, Two, Three, Four, and Five had to relocate, and their land, plants, and tea [plantations] were all destroyed. In Section xx, Saw aaaa had 1,000 acres of his tea plantation destroyed. There was also another 1,500 acres more [that was destroyed]. When he [Saw aaaa] went to report this to Ta Pa Ka Commander Tin Aye, Tin Aye told him, 'I don't know anything about it. It was the people under me who did it.' He [Tin Aye] has not taken any responsibility. Now they [SPDC] have built their Army camp and the homes for their children and wives, and all of the villagers have had to flee or were relocated." - Field report from a KHRG researcher (FR1, 2/00)

In addition to the Army camp, the SPDC wanted to remake the town so that it would be more appealing to foreign visitors. The SPDC ordered the widening of the main road through the town, the construction of a hotel for foreigners and even an amusement park was slated for construction. Rather than provide more opportunities for the townspeople and surrounding villagers, the tourism project brought only more forced labour, poverty and hardship. In addition to having their land confiscated, the townspeople had to contribute their labour to the building of the hotel and other structures in the town. The surrounding villages such as Ker Weh, Kaw Law Kah, Ler Ker Der Koh, Ler Ker Der Kah and several others, had to send forced labourers. The new Army camp also meant that more forced labourers were required to maintain the camp, act as messengers and perform general labour around the camp. Villagers are also forced to porter supplies up to outlying camps in the surrounding hills which act as security for the town.

"They are building in Than Daung Gyi. They made a hotel for the foreigners to come and stay. In Than Daung, they built their Army camp and called it Bayinnaung Army camp. The villagers who stay close to them are called to go and do 'loh ah pay', so the villagers have to go and work for them. The villages that are there are Ker Weh, Kaw Law Kah, Ler Kler Der Koh, Ler Ker Der Tha. There are many villages; I can't name all of them. They have had to go and make the hotel and Bayinnaung Army camp." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

"They want to make Than Daung Gyi a tourist resort, so they have to rebuild [the town]. It is not getting better for the civilians; it is getting worse and worse because they always have to carry [loads for the SPDC]. They have to carry from Than Daung Gyi to Day Loh Toh. They have to go and carry rice. All of the villages have to go and carry. There are not any villages who can avoid carrying." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG Field Researcher (Interview #3, 8/02)

Currently, possibly because of the SPDC's continued inability to provide enough security to the area, the town is empty of tourists. Although it appears on many maps, including one that lists it as a tourist destination, and on the websites of several Burmese tourism companies, Than Daung Gyi remains off-limits to foreigners. The buildings that were constructed for the tourists remain closed and it is unclear whether the hotel receives any visitors at all.

"They have made many new buildings in Than Daung Gyi. They built them for tourists, so they built them very well and quite big, but now they have closed them because people don't go there." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

Other Forms of Forced Labour

"When they call upon us, we have to go. When they demand that we work, we must go. If we do not go, they will shell the village with their big weapon [mortar]. So we have to go and work." - "Saw Th'Kee Soe" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #17, 4/01)

As well as shuttling rations and munitions between Army camps and working on the roads, villagers are also forced to perform a number of other duties for the SPDC. These tasks include building and maintaining Army camps, cutting firewood, fetching water, cutting wood and bamboo, making thatch, serving as set tha ('messengers'), constructing and repairing fences, acting as guides for SPDC Army columns, and standing on sentry duty around strategic points such as roads and bridges. Whenever the SPDC orders the villagers to report for forced labour, they must comply with whatever demands are issued. If they are told to build a fence then they must build a fence, if they are told to cut bamboo then they must cut bamboo. Villagers are never paid for the work; instead they must bring their own tools as well as their own food and water. Whatever the villagers are ordered to do must be completed. The villagers cannot go home early and villagers who become ill must continue working because the SPDC soldiers will not allow them to return home. Answering the SPDC's demands for the various forms of forced labour severely limits the amount of time that villagers are able to spend working in their fields. The time spent working for the SPDC equates to less time that the villagers have to work for themselves, and ultimately less food for their families.

"There are many different things that we have to do for them for loh ah pay. We have to repair their camp, and cut bamboo and small logs. We have to go for loh ah pay every month. Sometimes we have to cut our own bamboo. If we don't have any bamboo, then we have to go and cut it in the jungle. When they force us, there are about twenty or thirty people who have to go. They don't give us food; we have to take our own food. They don't pay us. We also have to go for set tha ['messenger']. They said that if we get a special message [information on KNLA movements]; we have to go and tell them. Even

if there is no special message, we have to go and see them." - "Naw Hsa Maw" (F, 48), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #67, 7/02)

"They have used forced labour four times already this year. They don't feed us any food and they don't give us any water to drink. Sometimes if they want to feed us, they feed us, but they don't always feed us; [sometimes] they don't give us anything." - "Saw Ni Ko Win" (M, 44), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #136, 12/02)

"Sometimes we can finish quickly and we can go home in the evening. They tell us 'you can't go home if you don't finish your work. If you finish quickly, you can go home quickly'. I remember the last time that they forced the villagers; it was on December 12th 2002." - "Saw Ni Ko Win" (M, 44), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #136, 12/02)

"One person had to go from each house. It was on December 8th 2002. They were from Infantry Battalion #73. We had to take our own food. We had to take our own tools. Sometimes we can't go home if we don't finish. Sometimes if we ask [for medicine] they give it to us, but they don't

allow them [the sick villagers] to go home." - "Saw Heh Kay Law" (M, 32), village, to wnship (Interview #134, 12/02)

The SPDC A r m y constantly sends out o r d e r s To: <u>Stamp:</u> Date: 25-3-2002
Chairperson #x Strategic Operations Command Group
xxxx village Southern Command Headquarters

Subject: Gather and send split bamboo

Regarding the above subject, at xxxx village split 50 pieces of 10 feet long wa bo [species of giant bamboo] bamboo for making floors. Send them to arrive at the Sa Ba Ha [Strategic Operations Command] on the 26th of March, you are informed.

[Sd.]

Order #8: A translation of an order sent to a village demanding building materials. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #8 in Appendix D.]

demanding wood, bamboo and thatch. Some of the materials are used to build and maintain the Army's camps; the rest are taken and sold for a profit by the officers. The villagers must go and cut the specified lengths of bamboo in the forest and then carry the poles to whichever camp demanded them. Thatch is even more time consuming because the villagers must first find the leaves in the forest, then build bamboo frames, insert the leaves and finally carry the completed thatch shingles to the Army camp. This often takes several weeks for the villagers to complete. Once the materials have been brought to

the camp, either the same villagers or people from another village will have to perform more forced labour constructing whatever the SPDC wants built.

"When they called for loh ah pay, they demanded 50 [lengths of] bamboo from each village. We had to pack our own rice and go and cut the bamboo. After that, we had to send it to their Army camp; it takes six hours. That was on December 7th 2002. Sometimes we even have to go and make the fence for them." - "Saw L'Paw Wah" (M, 42), village secretary from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #137, 12/02)

Village heads receive almost constant demands from Army camps for the villagers to perform various types of forced labour at the Army camps. Villagers are ordered to repair the roofs of the barracks, build new barracks, dig wells, fetch firewood or water, and cut the brush around the camp. All of the wood and bamboo used in the construction of the barracks, bunkers and fences around the camps are cut and carried to the camps by the villagers. Villagers have sometimes been ordered to construct the defensive bunkers and trenches in the Army camps. In October 2002, an entire village in the far north of Than Daung township was forced to build a fence around a hill field belonging to SPDC Army soldiers based nearby.

This case is unusual in as much that ordinarily, not all villagers from the one village required to report for forced labour at the same time, but in this case, the job needed to be completed within a time span of only two or three days, requiring

all villagers, the able, the young, the elderly, and the infirm to help complete the task in the allotted time.

"When they call for wontan [servants], I have to go and work. We had to go and make a fence for them. They ordered one person from each house to go. We had to go. We didn't have any wood or bamboo so we had to search for it. We had to go and cut down bamboo and trees. Every different group [military unit] which comes here forces us to do this. There are no trees and no bamboo left for us to cut. They [SPDC] are cutting and destroying the bamboo. We had to make a fence for them. After that, we had to build houses and roof their houses. We are afraid of them. We have our own work to do, but we have to leave it and go to help them with their work. If we don't work [for them], they come and get angry with us so we have to work for them." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 22), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

"They forced us to carry their loads, fence their plantations, and dig if they [SPDC] told us to dig. We all have to do what we are told to do." - "Naw Mu Ko" (F, 60), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #8, 11/00)

"We have to cut firewood for the soldiers. They come and take it everyday. They take one or two baskets. They also force the people to cut bamboo and make the fence for their Army camp. They [the villagers] have to cut one or two truck [loads] each time. Sometimes they order [the villagers] to cut about 500 pieces of wood and a thousand pieces of bamboo. If they [SPDC] tell us to go and make the fence at the place where they live [Army camp], we have to go and cut the wood and the bamboo. Sometimes it is not far, but sometimes it is about four or five miles away. We have to take our own food, baskets, and machetes." - "Saw Htoo Klih" (M, 48), forcibly relocated village head from K—village, Than Daung township (Interview #180, 3/02)

"Sometimes we had to go for emergency [loh ah pay] and sometimes we had to go for regular [loh ah pay]. They had emergency [loh ah pay] once a month. We had to go and cut the bushes from beside the car road, we had to go and build their huts, and we had to go and build their warehouses at Bu Sah Kee." - "Saw Ta Pla" (M, 21), forcibly relocated Village Secretary from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #27, 7/01)

19-3-2001

To: Chairperson

[We] Called for 7 loh ah pay people but only 3 people arrived, so send the remaining 4 people to arrive tonight. Bring along mattocks [large hoes], shovels, and food for 5 days. The Chairperson and Secretary are also to come. If [you] do not come, it will be the Chairperson's responsibility.

[Sd.] (Camp Commander) yyyy Camp

Order #9: A translation of an SPDC order, clearly stipulating that the villagers are to bring their own food and tools for use in performing forced labour at the SPDC camp. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #9 in Appendix D.]

"Our villagers don't have to go for loh ah pay to build the fence [at the Army camp]. We only have to make the fence for their hill field. The last time when we had to go and make the fence was in October 2002. ... We had to build it within two or three days, so the whole village had to go." - "Saw Mya Thu" (M, 45), village secretary from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #138, 12/02)

Men, women, children and the elderly all go for forced labour at the Army camps. The work at the Army camps is usually easier than portering, so many times it is the women and children who go. This also allows the men to have time to go to work in the fields. Most village heads send villagers in rotating shifts varying from one to ten days. If the camp is far from the village, the villagers must sometimes sleep at the camp. The number of villagers demanded from each village is usually dependent on the size of the village. Some Army camps rotate the work from village to village. Villagers who go must bring their own tools and food, because these are almost never provided by the soldiers. There is also never any payment for the work.

"If we need a machete, then we have to take our own machete. We have to take our own tools. We go early in the morning and cut bamboo on the way [to the Army camp]. When we arrive at the camp, we have to work there." - "Saw Ni Ko Win" (M, 44), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #136, 12/02)

The term set tha translates as 'messenger' in English and is most commonly used, as the name implies, for errand runners and messengers. The SPDC officers, when issuing their demands to villages, usually do so through the set tha. The SPDC order documents, like those reproduced throughout this report as well as in numerous previously published KHRG reports [see "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton,

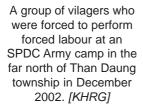
Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003),] are hand delivered to the village heads by these set tha. Villagers go for work as set tha in rotating shifts, usually of two to three days at a time. When there are no letters to send, the set tha also perform menial work around the camps. In order to show the way, SPDC Army columns often take people from villages along their route of march to serve as guides. Guides are usually taken from one village until the next, where they are released and another villager

... they just force the villagers to do it

"When I went to help them at Tha Aye Hta, they forced me to make a bridge across the Tha Aye Hta River for them. I told them that I couldn't do it, but they told me that I had to do it anyway. It was during the rainy season. The river was flooded. We were faced with a problem. The SPDC orders us like this, but they don't do it themselves. They just force the villagers to do the work. They oppress the villagers. We had to make it [the bridge] with bamboo. We had to go and cut down the trees and split the bamboo into thin strips to make the bridge for them. They couldn't make the bridge, so they forced us to do it. They said to us 'You are villagers, why can't you make the bridge?' When we finished, they forced us to carry their food for them. When we go to do set tha ['messenger'] we have to do whatever they tell us to do. We have to cut bamboo for them. We have to go and work in fear. We have to go and cut the bamboo over here and over there. They just sit down and watch us. They don't do it, they just force the villagers to do it. They order us to work, so we have to work because they are the SPDC. We start work at seven o'clock in the morning and work until four o'clock [in the afternoon]. At first, they tell us to take a rest for a little bit and then they force us to dig their place and make their huts for them. They allow us to take a rest for one hour from eleven o'clock until twelve o'clock. They guard us. They think that we will run away. They stand beside us with their guns and guard us. They ask us, 'How much food did you bring?' We tell them that we only brought a little bit of food. We say, 'We don't have as much as you, so you have to feed us.' But they never feed us enough. We even have to take our own machetes and crowbars." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

is ordered to guide the soldiers on to their next destination. Some villagers however, are taken along by the SPDC columns for much longer. In January 2002, KHRG interviewed a villager from Tantabin township who had been repeatedly called upon time and time again to guide SPDC soldiers for long distances over the past four years. Each journey lasted from one day to two or three weeks. Being forced to do this over and over again has made it very difficult, if not impossible for this villager to grow food for himself and his family. During this time, he has had to resort to begging his friends and family for food.

"They often arrested me. They ordered me to guide for them. I had to go with them every day and every night. Sometimes they forced me to guide them to Bu Sah Kee, and sometimes to Maw Thay Der, and sometimes to Saw Tay Der. They have ordered me to guide for them for nearly four years. I am tired in my heart as well as physically. I can't do anything. Living is difficult. My parents, grandparents, and my friends give me food. ... I guided them the wrong way once and they hit me. They hit me in the head four or five times. The person who hit me was a Major, his name is Thein Win." - "Saw Aung Htwe" (M, 41), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #44, 1/02)





Killings, Arrests and Torture

"In the past, they tortured and killed my brother-in-law Saw Maung San Khin. They have also killed another one of my brothers-in-law and my nephew. They were Saw Aung Nay Kyaw and Saw Kin Maung Si [respectively]. They have killed three people [from his family]. ... They shot them dead." - "Saw Soe Win" (M, 55), deputy secretary from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #18, 4/01)

Villagers living in SPDC controlled areas can be arbitrarily arrested and tortured by SPDC soldiers for minor infringements as well or for no reason whatsoever. Much of the violence is directed against the village heads because they are the people who the SPDC holds accountable if anything goes wrong. Reasons for being arrested and subjected to torture can range from being too slow to respond to a summons to a meeting, not having a letter of recommendation, retaliation for an SPDC Army soldier being wounded, or being suspected of being KNLA. SPDC soldiers sometimes beat villagers when they are unable to understand the demands the soldiers give them in Burmese. Most villagers in the mountains only speak Karen. Only a few of the better educated villagers, who have often spent some time in the plains, are able to speak Burmese.

"They [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] have tortured people. When they arrived at Play Hsa Loh they ordered us to go and see them, so the villagers who were responsible [the village heads] went to see them. They arrived late and the guerrilla troops hit them. They hit them with a stick. They hit one person five times and the other person three times. One of them was Saw aaaa; he is 35 years old. The other one was Saw bbbb; he is 20 years old. They had to be treated for one week."

-"Saw Bway Htoo" (M, 32), former village head from Y— village, Tantabin township (Interview #91, 1/02)

"When they [SPDC] came here, they forced me to go with them to Pa Leh Wah. When I was coming back from Pa Leh Wah, I wanted to go to the toilet, but when I was going to the toilet, the soldiers came along and kicked me. I sat down and they kicked me until I fell down. I stood up and they kicked me again and I fell down again. They kicked me more than ten times. They said, 'Who do you think I am?' and then they kicked me. They kicked and kicked and kicked me more than ten times. I sat down on the road and they walked away. They came back again and asked me, 'Who do you think I am?' I told them, 'Nobody.' Then he slapped my face and kicked me. Ah Lah! They kicked me about 20 or 30 times. That was during 2000." - "Saw Pa Tray" (M, 52), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #111, 3/02)

"If we couldn't speak Burmese they [SPDC] hit us." - "Naw Der Ler" (F, 21), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #128, 4/02)

"When they speak to the villagers and if the villagers can't speak Burmese, they sometimes hit them." - "Saw Pa Thaw" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #114, 3/02)

"They [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] ordered me to send the villagers to them, but the villagers were afraid of them and didn't dare to go to them. When the villagers didn't go, he got angry with me and beat me. They punched me twice in the chest and once in my mouth. They told me to give them 3,000 Kyat or they would beat me again. That was in December [2001]. It was Myint Zaw's soldiers who beat me." - "Saw Nu Ku" (M, 38), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #48, 1/02)

SPDC military units that have suffered casualties due to KNLA ambushes or landmines, often take out their revenge on the villagers. After the KNLA has ambushed an SPDC unit, the SPDC will often go to the nearest village and punish them for 'allowing' the attack to take place. Villagers are expected to report any KNLA movements that they are aware of to the local SPDC battalion. Whenever an attack occurs, the SPDC deems that the villagers failed to perform their duty and punish them for it. In December 2000, "Saw Maung Gyi" was ordered to serve as a porter and guide for the Ba La Guerrilla Retaliation Unit, at which time, one of the soldiers was wounded by the KNLA in an ambush. The commanding officer, Major Myint Zaw, accused "Saw Maung Gyi" of informing the KNU/ KNLA of their movements and therefore being responsible for the attack. He was then beaten severely before having 70 viss (114 kgs. / 252 lbs.) of betelnut demanded from him in order for the beatings to stop. This amount of betelnut would have been valued at approximately 42,000 Kyat - money that he was obliged to borrow from friends, and thus accrue a substantial debt, which in all probability he will not be able to repay. Occasionally the SPDC goes even further and kills villagers when their soldiers are wounded or killed by KNLA landmines or in ambushes. Some SPDC units have gone to

the nearest village and opened fire on it indiscriminately with small arms or fired several mortar shells into the village.

"They took me with them as a porter and a guide. When we were half way [to where they were going], one of them was injured. He stepped on a landmine. We went back to the village. When we arrived back in the village that evening, they beat me. They beat me four times with [the butts of] their guns, once on my cheek, once in my stomach, and twice on my back. They hit my head. It hurt my face and my whole body. ... He beat me with a length of bamboo [as well as with the butt of his rifle]. It was as big [around] as my wrist. They hit me in the head three or four times. I fell unconscious. They beat my head. They hit me once under my eye, and twice on top of my head. I know that they hit me three times. I don't know if they hit me more than that because I was unconscious. ... They demanded money. They demanded the money after they beat me. If I didn't pay them the money, they were going to beat me again. I had to pay them 7,000 Kyat. ... After they beat me, my face was blue [bruised]. It didn't cure quickly. It took a very long time." -"Saw Maung Gyi" (M, 43), villager from P-village, Tantabin township (Interview #94, 4/01)

"They have tortured me. In 2000, the guerrilla group [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] entered P- village on December 15. Their Commander is Major Myint Zaw. He came and stayed in our village. While he was in the village, he forced me to go with them on the 19th [December, 2000]. He forced me to carry a load and be a guide. When I went with them, one of their soldiers was wounded. After the incident happened they came back [to the village] and he hit me. I could not count how many times they hit me. They hit me in the belly with the butts of their guns twice and on my back once. They hit me with a piece of bamboo two or three times. They also punched me about twenty or thirty times. It was so painful. I thought that I would go blind because they punched my eyes and they were bruised. I am not blind, but I still have the scars. He [Myint Zaw] accused me of being in contact with the outside people [KNU]. I told him that I didn't know that it was going to happen, but he said, 'Impossible, you must have had contact with them. I must do something to you.' Saya [Corporal] Thein Ngai, who is subordinate to him, is the one who hit me. ... He demanded 70 viss [114 kgs./252 lbs.] of betelnut. If I didn't give him the 70 viss of betelnut he would have killed me. I didn't have any money [to buy the beteinut] so I had to borrow some from my friends." - "Saw Maung Gyi" (M, 43), villager from P— village, Tantabin township (Interview #94, 4/01)

"They did it after a fight [with the KNLA] occurred. They slapped Saw aaaa's face three times. He is the same age as me; he is about 38 years old. A fight occurred, so they came back and punished the villagers." - "Saw Aye Min" (M, 38), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #10, 4/01)

"The Karen [KNLA] planted some landmines which killed three SPDC soldiers, so they [SPDC] blamed the villagers. They searched and interrogated the people. They arrested three of the villagers and accused them of planting the landmines. ... They arrested the three villagers and beat them like you would beat a dog or a pig. They beat one of them to death and sent the others to be porters. They then fled and are still alive. ... They covered him with a tarpaulin and stomped and beat him until he was dead. ... They beat him with a crowbar, wrapped his head in a tarpaulin and poured water over his head. They [bound their hands and] hung them from a tree and interrogated them. They beat all three of them; the other two people got a few wounds. They almost beat them to death as well; they beat them until they were unconscious. ... They said that they would not allow anything to happen, and if something did happen they would kill the villagers. They killed the villager." - "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)

"After they [SPDC] fought with the KNU, they came to us and arrested and tortured the villagers. They arrested Saw aaaa, Saw bbbb, Saw cccc, and dddd [as well as the interviewee himself]. That happened in 2000 at T—. I don't remember the date. They were from IB #124. They tied us with rope and then they interrogated us about the fighting that had occurred. They blamed us and interrogated, hit, poked [with their rifle barrels], and punched us until they got the result that they wanted. They said that we were helping the KNU and welcoming the KNU to come and sleep in our homes. [They said] 'You help them and then they come and fight us'. We said that we don't do that and that we don't help them. When we said this, they didn't believe us. They said, 'You feed them. If you didn't feed them, this would not have happened.' They spoke to us like that and beat us with their guns and hit us. They hit my head and my body. They hit me so many times that I couldn't count. They didn't like it when we looked at their faces. If we looked at their faces, they would slap us in the face. They said that they would release us, but we had to take responsibility that no more fighting occurred. They said this to us, but I told them that I didn't agree with them; that we cannot take that responsibility. I told them that it was not my job to do that and I did not dare to take that

responsibility." - "Saw Nay Htoo" (M, 48), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #191, 11/02)

"One of their soldiers was injured by a landmine. They buried him beside aaaa's house in xxxx [village]. They said that it was not their fault; that it was the villagers' fault. Then they fired their guns and shelled the village." - "Saw Way K'Lu Say" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #38, 1/02)

"When they went out on patrol, they were hurt by a landmine. They came back [to the village] in the evening and fired their guns. The villagers were afraid." - Saw Ek K'Mu" (M, 51), village secretary from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #22, 4/01)

One of the more common allegations that many villagers are arrested and beaten for is aiding the resistance. Although in the majority of these cases, the charges are false or are based on insubstantial evidence, the accused villager may be subjected to various types of torture before being released. Often the villager is taken back to the Army camp and the



A 43 year-old villager from Tantabin township showing wounds that he suffered when he was tortured by a group of *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* soldiers. The wounds are from plastic that was held over a flame and dripped on his back. *[KHRG]*

village head must youch for the villager and a ransom paid before the villager will be released. Arrests are often just another way of extorting money out of the villagers, because if the SPDC knows for sure that a villager is KNU or KNLA, the person is usually executed on the spot. Soldiers from IB #39 attempted to arrest "Saw Plaw Kee" from Tantabin township in 2000 under the accusation that he worked with the KNU. Being unable to arrest him, they instead arrested his wife and his twenty year old son. His son was released the following day only for them to then arrest another of his children, this time a seven year old boy. The SPDC then began demanding that he pay them for their release. He was originally only required to pay 4-5,000 Kyat per installment, but as time progressed, the greed of the soldiers grew. On his last payment, his fourteenth, he was forced to pay 30,000 Kyat for each his wife and his son and then they were to finally be released. However, the greed of the soldiers had not yet been satisfied, and they instead demanded one more payment (which was due to be paid shortly after the time of his interview), which had now increased to 60,000 Kyat each for the release of his wife and his son.

"They arrested me on the 7th of July [2002]. They asked me about my job and they accused me [of aiding the KNU]. I told them that ever since I started [working as a village head] I have only worked for their government [SPDC]. I told them that I don't belong to the other side [KNU], but they didn't believe me. They told me that they know everything I do; that I helped the other side [KNU]. They accused me of cooperating with them [KNU]. They locked my hands behind me with handcuffs. They also arrested my son and tortured him. I don't know where my son is now. I don't know if he is still alive or not." - "Saw Ree Ko Tha" (M, 59), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #130, 7/02)

"On January 11th 1999 they accused me [of being in the KNU] and showed me a [KNLA] soldier's uniform. They didn't find it in my house; when I arrived at their place they showed me the uniform and accused me of owning the uniform. I don't know where they got it from. They said, 'You have that kind of uniform, so you must be one of our enemies.' I replied to them, saying that I was not one of their enemies; that I was just a villager who was trying to grow a hill field. They said, 'Sure, you have that uniform, so you are our enemy.' They interrogated me and kept me there for one day and one night." - "Saw Nay Lay" (M, 49), villager from xxxxxvillage, Than Daung township (Interview #125, 3/02)

"They accused me [of being in the KNU] one time. They arrested me when I went to buy cardamom and they forced me to walk with them [porter] **for six months."** - "Saw Aung Htwe" (M, 41), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #44, 1/02)

"I have been arrested by the SPDC once or twice. The first time that I was arrested, it was by LIB #701. They accused me of being in contact with the revolutionaries [KNU]. The SPDC tied me up and tortured me for two hours before they released me." - "Saw Plaw Kee" (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #21, 10/00)

"My name is on their list. They said that I have had contact with the outside people [KNU]. They arrested my children and my wife, but I got away. My son is twenty years old. They tied him up for one day and one night and then they released him. Then, they arrested another one of my children. He is only seven years old. They took him to xxxx [Army camp]. They didn't let him see his mother. They put him in a cell and demanded money [for his release]. In the beginning they demanded 4,000 to 5,000 Kyat each time. They have demanded again and again. They have demanded fourteen times now. The last time, they demanded 30,000 Kyat. [Now] they are asking for more money. They want 60,000 Kyat for each person. If I can pay 60,000 Kyat for each one, they will be released. They said that they would set them free. I owe people money. I have had to borrow 70,000 Kyat from people, with the interest it will be over 100,000 Kyat." - "Saw Plaw Kee" (M, ?), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #21, 10/00)

On other occasions, the soldiers order the arrested villager to provide them with a walkie-talkie or a gun. The villagers then have to search for them. Usually they are unable to find the items and the KNLA are not willing to give up their precious weapons and communications equipment, so the villager will be told by the SPDC soldiers to give a sum of money instead. If the villager is able to get a gun or a walkietalkie, the soldiers go back to their superiors and claim that they captured them in combat and hopefully receive a reward or a promotion. Prior to the relocation and destruction of S- village in Tantabin township in April 2000, Soldiers from IB #92 threatened to kill the villagers with an overdose of methamphetamines if they failed to locate the weapons that were taken by two SPDC deserters. Fortunately for the villagers, this was only a hollow threat and no one was injected even after being unable to find the weapons after searching for them for a week.

"They arrested me in my village and interrogated me in Ku Thay Der village. They accused me and said that I was collecting Karen intelligence. [They were from] Infantry Battalion #232. Their Battalion Commander is Major Kyi Myint and their Company Commander is Lieutenant Than Oo. They said, 'You are Karen intelligence and you should give us information so that we can find them [KNLA]. They gave you a walkie-talkie and a small gun [pistol]. You always warn the villagers and give the information [to the KNLA], so we can never find them.' They told me to find one walkie-talkie and one pistol and give them to them. I told them that I was a villager and that I didn't do that sort of thing. Then they tortured They punched me in the face. I don't remember how many times they hit me. They interrogated me the whole night and when they didn't get any answers they wrapped my head in a tarpaulin. I don't know how long [they left me like that]. They kept me wrapped up until I was unconscious. After that, they still couldn't get any answers so they tied my hands and my legs behind me and then tied me to the wall [for] the whole night. ... They arrested me on March 7th 1999. They kept me for a week. Even when they took me back to yyyy they hurt me. They tied me up under the house and beat my head against the post. I don't know [how many times they did this], I was unconscious. When I woke up my head was in pain." - "Saw Kaw Kwee" (M, 26), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #102, 1/02)

"They forced the people to search [for the guns] until they got them back. If they could not find them, they [SPDC] would kill the villagers. ... They would inject us with crazy medicine [methamphetamines]. They threatened us like this. The villagers could do nothing." - "Saw Mu Wah" (M, ?), forcibly relocated villager from S—village, Tantabin township (Interview #76, 10/00)

The methods of torture used by the SPDC are just as inventive as they are barbaric. Some villagers have spoken of having had molten plastic dripped onto their bare skin, or having being branded with a hot iron much the same as livestock. Another method of torture is to scrape a piece of wood or a mortar shell back and forth along their shins, abrading the skin on the victim's legs and thus causing it to flay off. Other villagers have been bound and had water poured up their nose. A more common form of this torture is for the soldiers to wrap the villager's head in a piece of tarpaulin and then pour water over the victim's head. This clogs the holes in the fabric, temporarily suffocating the person until the water runs off and the holes open again. Many of the various forms of torture utilised by the SPDC are continued until the victim loses consciousness; in which case they are revived and the torture repeated. Most SPDC Army camps contain a set of medieval-style stocks which are used to lock a villager's legs in.

Villagers are often left in the stocks out in the sun or rain for hours and sometimes days at a time as punishment for various offences.

"When they [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] entered K—and saw Pastor aaaa and Saw bbbb, he [an SPDC officer] called to them. They hadn't done anything wrong, but they ordered them to lie down and beat them until they were not moving anymore [until they were unconscious]. He almost killed them." - "Saw Ba Htee" (M, 40) villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #97, 11/00)



This woman was shot by soldiers from IB #75 on November 29th 2000. She escaped with her life only by pretending to be dead. This photo was taken 6 days later as she was receiving treatment from a mobile medic. [KHRG]

"I have been arrested. I think that it was in March 1999. It was a column of troops from IB #26 with Major Ngai Tun, Major Theh Pyo Aung, and guerrilla [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] NCO Zaw Yeh. They called a meeting so we went to it. They said that we were hiding our Karen people [KNU]. Then they hit us. At that time, we said nothing and they beat us a lot. They tied us up. They tied our arms behind our backs. They [also] tied our legs, and our necks. They beat us with a stick until the stick broke. I don't know [how many times] but it was painful and burning all over my whole body. We had to crawl [back to the village]

on all fours. ... They beat us at Mwee Loh." - "Saw Thay Pa Doh" (M, 49), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #47, 1/02)

"In the past they arrested me and mistook me for one of the outsider people [KNLA]. They hit me and wrapped me in a tarpaulin [and subjected him to water torture] and put me in a hole. They kept me in that cell for one or two months. They tortured me in many ways. They wanted to kill me, but I am just a villager. I am only alive now because God helped me."-"Saw Toh Lay" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #59, 4/02)

"I didn't have a letter of recommendation and they arrested me at Shan See Boh. I went there to get some food. They arrested me and took me to the camp in Yay Shan and locked me in the stocks for over a month. They locked my legs in the stocks and tied my hands. They poured water on me. They took a pot of water and poured water in my nose. They also dripped [molten] plastic on my chest and back. It was the worst on my arms." - "Saw Kweh Pa" (M, 52), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #46, 1/02)

SPDC soldiers have on occasion shot villagers in their fields or on the paths. The soldiers claim that they thought the villagers were KNU. When the soldiers see the villagers they often call out to the villagers to come to them, but the villagers, believing they will be taken as porters, run away. The soldiers then open fire on the villagers. Many villagers, however, have said that the soldiers often call out and open fire at the same time, without waiting for the villagers to respond. In this way on July 14th 2001, Saw Ah B'Doh and Saw Htoo Maw were shot dead by soldiers from IB #30 as they were returning to their village from their plantation. On another occasion, in March 2000, SPDC soldiers caught two teenage boys hiding to avoid forced labour. One was shot in the bladder by the soldiers and the other was stabbed twice with a knife, killing him. In June 2003, a group of 300-400 villagers were ordered to carry rations for the regular SPDC Army battalions along the Toungoo to Mawchi motor road to the newly established camps on the road close to the border with Karenni State. As they were returning from Ler Wah Moo Thwa Koh Army camp to Tha Aye Hta for the second time, they were ambushed by one of the Dam Byan Byaut Kya units which was laying in wait for them. As the soldiers opened fire, the villagers fled, leaving their loads strewn across the road. At least one villager was reported to have been killed in the attack. It is not clear why the Dam Byan Byaut Kya did this, but it would have been obvious to them that it was villager porters and not gun-carrying soldiers that they were shooting at.

"They killed Saw Ah B'Doh, he was my husband. They shot him dead on July 14th [2001] near K—when he was coming back from the plantation. They also shot Saw Htoo Maw; he was only 20 years old." - "Naw Paw Soh" (F, 22), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #65, 4/02)

"In the past our villagers were afraid [of going to] porter and do loh ah pay, so we would flee and hide. One of the SPDC troops arrested two boys and killed both of them. That was in March, 2000. They arrested the two boys in the night and they shot one of them dead, and stabbed the other one to death with a knife. The one who they shot dead was Saw Ku Htoo. He was nineteen years old. They shot him once under his bladder with a G3 [assault rifle of the SPDC Army]. The other one was Saw Klay Paw. He was sixteen years old. They stabbed him twice with a knife. They stabbed him once in his side and once in his heart." - "Saw No Poh" (M, 49), village head from M-village, Than Daung township (Interview #159, 3/02)

"In June 2003, IB #124 and IB #26 built their camps on the Taw Oo to Mawchi car road and forced about 300 or 400 villagers to carry rice to them. The SPDC forced them to go back and carry the rations from Tha Aye Hta to Ler Wah Moo Thwa Koh camp again. When the villagers were coming back one of the guerrilla units ambushed them and shot at them. The villagers all ran away, leaving their rice bags and shrimp paste scattered on the road. I know that one of the villagers from Der Doh named Saw Ku Thu was killed." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

Some SPDC soldiers demand alcohol from the villagers whenever they stay in a village, and once drunk, fire off their weapons in the air. This further terrorises the villagers who do not know if an attack has taken place or if the soldiers have begun to shoot at the villagers. In January 2002, a drunken SPDC commander, staying in one of the villages near Kler Lah, became enraged when the village heads had dared to talk back to him over the tying up of a sick elderly man. He then stormed out of the house in a fit of rage. He then went to where a mortar was positioned between some houses and ordered his men to fire three mortar rounds at the village. Luckily no one was injured; all three of the shells fell in an area between the village and another village. Only two of the shells actually exploded.

"[Sometimes] they drink alcohol and get drunk. When they get drunk they shoot their guns in the village. [One time] they shot their big gun [mortar] three times in the village, but no one

was injured. Only two shells exploded." - "Saw K'Paw" (M, 46), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #106, 3/02)

"About one month ago, in January [2002], they [SPDC] entered our village. One of the commanders came and slept in my house. ... He said, 'I don't want to see the Kler Lah villagers' faces anymore.' He said to his soldier, 'If you see any Kler Lah villagers, just shoot all of them dead. I don't want to see their faces.' He then said that he was going to bind one of the village elders and me. The chairperson and the secretary told him that he [the elder] was very sick. He [the commander] said, 'He may be sick, but I don't care.' Then he got angry and went outside between the houses and fired the mortar. He fired three shells, but only two of them exploded. They landed between the two villages, so no one was injured." - "Naw Eh Kri Mu" (F, 50), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #112, 3/02)

SPDC soldiers, especially officers have occasionally tried to rape village women in Toungoo District. Some SPDC officers have tried to force themselves on women after drinking alcohol. Women who are forced to go as porters for several days are especially susceptible to rape. The Dam Byan Byaut Kya have built up something of a reputation for harassing women and rape. On February 25th 2002, five soldiers from the Wei Za Guerrilla Retaliation Unit entered a village in Than Daung township to demand food from the villagers. While in the village, Captain Aung Kaing Win, their commanding officer, tried to rape one of the women from whom he had just demanded rice and tea. She narrowly escaped after fighting off all five of them with a stick before running away. The soldiers then beat one of the village elders in retaliation for her defiance. On January 7th 2004, Major Kyaw Zaya and Captain Aung Naing Oo and Sergeant Tint Shwe, all from IB #124, raped Naw Bay Po of Kaw Soe Koh village. The soldiers took the 30 year old woman and her 1-year and 3-month old baby at 9 p.m. They raped her twice and then released her. The village head had been following them and took her home at 1 a.m. Following the rape, she was unable to speak. On February 5th 2004, Company Commander Aung Naing Oo forced the village head, a pastor and the woman's husband to sign their names to a document stating that Sergeant Tint Shwe did not have a weapon with him that night, that he only took Naw Bay Po as a guide and that he did not rape her.

"They [SPDC] come to the village very often. When they come, they do whatever they want. They even rape the women. It is very dangerous."
- "Saw Pa Thaw" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #114, 3/02)

"When they [the Wei Za Guerrilla Retaliation Unit] came here ... on February 25th [2002], they asked for tea to drink. There were five of them who came. Their commander also came. The name of the commander is Captain Aung Kaing Win. The commander also wanted to come and make trouble for me [to rape her]. All five of them came around me and I got angry and picked up a stick and hit them. After that I ran away. My uncle [a village elder] had to suffer [was beaten] because of me. They came to demand rice and we gave it to them, but they were not satisfied and they wanted something more." - "Naw Ka Ya" (F, 21), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #127, 3/02)

There have also been cases of officers, particularly among those from the Dam Byan Byaut Kya, attempting to coerce village women into marrying them. One such case occured in Than Daung township in 2000. Captain Cheh Tee (a.k.a. Win Myint), a Company Commander with the Wei Za Guerrilla Retaliation Unit, harassed a woman in an attempt to get her to marry him. He offered to keep her in a town and told her she would not have to work. He also offered to buy her betelnut plantation and give her the money immediately if she would go and live with him. When she refused, telling him that she had already been widowed and so could not remarry, he attempted to rape her. She was saved only when his soldiers came to investigate her screams. In a separate incident within the same village, Captain Cheh Tee was reported to have harassed yet another woman. When Cheh Tee learned that this second woman had a boyfriend to whom she was soon to be married, he went looking for him in a fit of jealousy to kill him. In a sick twist of fate, the boyfriend was later killed on June 20th 2000 after stepping on a landmine while returning to the village.

"I know one of the Company Commanders called Cheh Tee; most of the people [villagers] are afraid of him. Whenever he speaks [to the villagers], he hits them. He liked one of the women who lives in K-, named Naw aaaa. She was about thirty years old; maybe a little older. She didn't have a husband anymore [widowed], and it was in the evening when he [Cheh Tee] went to speak with her. He said, 'Wouldn't you like to be with [married to] a commander? If you would like I will take you with me when I leave and keep you in town. You will never have to work hard ever again. You can live [easily]. I will also sell your betelnut plantation for you if you would like to come and live with me. I will give you the money now.' She then said to him, 'I am a widow. My husband died and I live with my brother and sister, so I cannot remarry.' She thought that this would stop him, but then he extinguished the light and started to rape her. She tried to escape and shouted out. Cheh Tee's soldiers came running over and asked what was happening, so he stopped. I know of other stories. He wrote a [love] letter to one of the [other] women. Some of the villagers said to him, 'This woman has a boyfriend, and she will be getting married soon. Maybe tomorrow or maybe the next day, so please don't make any trouble for her.' Cheh Tee and his soldiers then went back to the village head's house and demanded that they tell him where he [the boyfriend] lived. They [soldiers]

then went looking for him so that they could kill him. He had to run for his life. On June 10th 2000, IB #20 had laid six landmines on the path, and when he came back to the village, he took a rest on the path. He put down his bamboo basket, but when he sat down, one of the landmines [exploded and] killed him." - "Saw Ba Htee" (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #97, 11/00)



Saw Pu Tu, a 30 year-old villager from Than Daung township was shot and killed by Dam Byan Byaut Kya soldiers near Wa Soe village on June 13 2003 while portering for a regular SPDC battalion. [KHRG]

Fees, Extortion and Looting

Perhaps the greatest vocation of the SPDC soldiers based within Toungoo District is the extortion of money, food, and goods from the civilian population. There is little in the lives of the villagers that does not attract some form of fee or tax. The myriad fees imposed upon the villagers range from the mundane to the ridiculous. Village heads are often ordered to provide the soldiers with rice, curries, cheroots, alcohol and whatever else the SPDC officers might want. Army columns often loot the villagers' rice, pigs and poultry when they pass through villages. Many villagers are living in abject poverty because of the constant demands for money and having to provide whatever the soldiers want. Many are in unrecoverable debt as a direct result of having to constantly borrow money to pay the soldiers or to contribute to buying pigs or chickens to give to the soldiers. As a result, many are unable to provide enough food for their own families.

Forced Labour Fees

"We have to pay [porter fees]. Each house has to give 1,000 Kyat per month. They [SPDC] said that if we don't pay them, we will have to relocate." - "Saw Min Htoo" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #56, 4/02)

Most of the fees which the villagers have to pay in Toungoo District are related to forced labour. The SPDC often collects the fees under the pretext that they are then given to those villagers who are forced to work by the SPDC as a method of payment for services rendered. A different fee is demanded by the SPDC for each of the various forms of forced labour. Some of the fees enable the villagers to avoid having to go for forced labour, while others are simply extortion money. The usual pattern is that an SPDC officer sends out an order to a village for forced labour and states how much money can be paid to avoid the work. The villagers pay the money and the officer than orders another village to do the work. They also pay, and so the order goes around all the villages in the area. Sometimes the order may go around the villages several times. Eventually the labour will have to be done and the officer will finally send out an order telling the villagers that they have to come to do the work and no money will be accepted. By this point the officers have already received tens of thousands of Kyat from the villagers. Some villages must pay fees to two or more Army camps at the same time. In addition to the regular SPDC units, the Dam Byan Byaut Kya units are also demanding fees from the villagers.

"The villagers are not united because the Burmese [Army] is demanding so much [from them]. They are demanding every day; they demand thousands of Kyat every day, so much that we cannot pay them." - "Saw Th'Kee Soe" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #17, 4/01)

"We have to pay them every month. There are many kinds of porter fees. We have to pay emergency [ad hoc] porter fees, loh ah pay fees, and also pay for simple [regular monthly] portering; there are three kinds of porter fees.""Saw Koh Gyi" (M, 40), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #53, 4/02)

"One time they demanded 6,000 Kyat from each village; 6,000 Kyat one time, 4,000 Kyat one time, 5,000 Kyat one time, and 7,000 Kyat one time. This time they demanded 7,000 Kyat. This was all in 2001." - "Saw Soe Win" (M, 55), deputy secretary from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #18, 4/01)

Although the SPDC sometimes claims that these fees are to pay the workers, the porters and labourers rarely see any of this money. Most of the money ends up lining the pockets of SPDC Army officers [for a few cases of porters being paid, see "Portering"]. The amount that the villagers must pay may vary widely from month to month. SPDC Army units generally remain posted in the same area for three to four months before rotating out to another area and different units can sometimes demand different amounts from the villagers. The fees are usually demanded regularly on a monthly basis. Typically each house within the village pays a fixed amount determined by the SPDC, or alternatively with a total is set for the entire village and the village head determines how much each house must pay. Most villagers are required to pay an average of 1-2,000 Kyat each month, depending on the size of the village and the greed of the local SPDC Army officers. Villagers who cannot pay the required fees must report for the shift of forced labour [see Order #10].

"They demanded money to pay the porters. Our villagers sometimes have had to pay 30,000 Kyat and sometimes we have had to pay 40,000 Kyat. Each house has to pay 1,000 Kyat [per month]. They have also demanded food worth 10,000 Kyat. We also have to go for emergency loh ah pay [ad hoc forced labour]. Two people have to go each week." - "Saw Ta Pla" (M, 21), forcibly relocated village secretary from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #27, 7/01)

"I get 3,500 Kyat each month. I then have to give money for the loh ah pay fees and the porter fees. I must give 1,200 Kyat [each]. I have only 1,000 Kyat or just a little more than 1,000 Kyat each month [to live on]."-"Saw Htay Mu" (M, 34), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #66, 7/02)

"If we don't go for loh ah pay [forced labour], we have to pay money; if we don't pay the money, we have to go for loh ah pay." - "Saw K'Paw" (M, 46), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #106, 3/02)

"If I have to go for loh ah pay but do not have time to go, then I have to pay 2,000 [Kyat]. If I don't pay, then there will be big problems." - "Saw Pu Ko Wah" (M, 35), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #96, 10/00)

"The average price is 1,200 Kyat from each house every month. They are going to move our village [if they do not pay], or they are going to burn our village." - "Saw Su Wah Lay" (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #28, 7/01)

"We have to pay once a month. There are many different prices. Sometimes we have to pay 700 K y a t , sometimes we have to pay 800 Kyat, or 1,000 Kyat, or 500 Kyat." - "Saw Myo" (M, 40), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #110, 3/02)

"We must give them [SPDC]

the wontan fees. They don't call them wontan fees, they call it loh ah pay. Sometimes we have to give them 600 Kyat and sometimes 15,000 Kyat." - "Saw Kaw Kwee" (M, 26), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #102, 1/02)

"We have to pay porter fees. We have to pay 1,000 Kyat per month. One house has to pay 1,000 Kyat, but some people cannot pay. Some people can only pay 500 Kyat and some pay only 700 Kyat." - "Naw Hser Lay" (F, 52) villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #15, 4/01)

In many cases across Toungoo District, the SPDC has specifically told the villagers not to report for forced labour each month, but instead to send the relevant fees. In some of these instances, those villagers who have reported to the SPDC Army camp because they are unable to pay the fees, have been told to return to their villages and send the money instead. The vast majority of SPDC Army commanders are more concerned with making themselves rich at the expense of the villagers than fighting the KNLA. These commanders use their positions to extract as much money as possible from the villagers. Some villagers have told KHRG researchers that they must pay porter or loh ah pay fees to the Dam Byan Byaut Kya units in addition to those that they must pay to the regular SPDC Army battalions in the area.

"They only demand money. At first, the people would go to sentry because the people didn't have any money to pay them, but they [SPDC] didn't like that. They demanded that we give them the money. We have to give the fees for six porters and two set tha [messengers] each month. They demand only the fees. Each month we have to give 27,000 Kyat. Each of the other

[n e a r b y] villages has to give 12,000 Kyat per month." - "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 46), village tract head, xxxx village, Tantabin t o w n s h i p (Interview #32, 7/01)

"Major Win Naing [from IB #75] demanded two porters from each village, but they demanded 700 Kyat each day for each person

ror each person [instead of sending the porters]. Each month we have to pay them 42,000 Kyat for the two porters." - "Saw Kya Leh" (M, 25), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #29, 7/01)

Villages that do not pay the fees on time will often receive another order to remind them to pay with an attached threat. If the fees are still not paid, then another order letter may arrive with a piece of charcoal, a bullet or a chilli included in the envelope. The charcoal symbolises that the village will be burned down, the bullet that the soldiers will kill them,

<u>Stamp:</u>

Frontline #75 Infantry Battalion #[unclear] Company

Date: 19-2-2001

xxxx [village] Chairperson

Come to report information to the *yyyy* Village Chairperson's house on 19-2-2001.

Bring the servant fees at the same time.

If [you] can't pay the servant fees, send the people to be servants.

[Sd.]

Deputy Warrant Officer bbbb Camp Commander yyyy Camp

Order #10: This order states clearly that if the fees are not paid, the villagers must go for forced labour. 'Come to report information' means to report intelligence on everything happening in and around the village. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #10 in Appendix D.]

and the chilli that the soldiers are going to make the situation 'hot'. By this point, most villages pay the required fees. If they do not, the soldiers may carry out the threats. In March 2001, a commander from IB #75 ordered K— village in Tantabin township to report to the local SPDC Army camp to pay their monthly quota of porter fees. The villagers were too afraid of what the soldiers might do to them upon arriving there, and consequently nobody from the village went to pay the fees. Then, on March 25th,

To:

the commander gave the order to shell the village and the soldiers fired two 60mm mortar shells into the village. More often the soldiers will come to the village and beat the village head as punishment for not getting enough money together.

"They ordered that the villagers from K—come to see

them [and pay the porter fees], so they demanded that the villagers from xxxx go and get them. They [the villagers from K—] didn't come, so they [SPDC] shelled K—. They fired their two-and-a-half inch [mortar] twice. This happened on March 25th 2001." - "Saw Th'Kee Soe" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #17, 4/01)

Villagers struggle to pay the fees on time, but are often in arrears. Most have to borrow money from each other or sell off their possessions or livestock. Others try to get some extra money by selling their small cash crops of cardamom, betelnut or fruit, or by working as day labourers for other villagers. In many villages it is the village headman who often has to make up the difference with his own money. The struggle to find enough money to pay the fees often results in the villagers not having enough time to work their fields. This will mean a much smaller harvest than is necessary to feed their families. The need to pay the fees also means that the villagers do not have enough money to buy food with which to supplement their diets. When the money and the food run out, many villagers have no other choice than to flee their villages and live in the forest.

"We needed to come back [to her village] and find a little bit of food to eat. That was at the time when the people were harvesting their cardamom. We thought that we would be able to come back and work so that we could get some food, but they wouldn't allow us to come back. We had to come back secretly to find food. We came back and got our cardamom. If we could get one basket of cardamom, we could take it back and sell it and buy some rice to eat. We had to find some food. They [SPDC] still demanded that we pay the porter fees. If we didn't have any money, they said that we must

Stamp:

Chairperson xxxx [village]

Village Peace and Development Council
Date: 2-6-02
Bawgali Gyi tract

[You] have to hand over loh ah pay servant fees of 15,000 [Kyat] to the Byaut Kya [Guerrilla] Captain, you are informed.

[Sd.]2-6-02
Stamp: Chairperson
Village Peace and Development Council
Bawgali Gyi tract - Than Daung township

Order #11: A translation of an order issued by a village tract chairperson, requesting money from a village head on behalf of a Dam Byan Byaut Kya officer. [A copy of the original Burmeselanguage order may be viewed as Order #11 in Appendix D.]

find it so we could pay them. We have had to borrow money from the villagers who stay in Kler Lah. We had to pay them back, but we couldn't pay them back for a whole year. We are still paying the money that owe we people. When they called for people to go [to porter] to Bu Sah Kee, we

had to go even though we didn't want to." - "Naw Thet Wah" (F, 58), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"We don't want to but they demand it from us, so we have to borrow from other people so that we can pay. When we pay them [SPDC] the money, we pay it with tears. There is no food for our children, but we still have to pay them even though we don't have it. We can't feed our children enough, but they still demand it from us." - "Naw Paw Htoo Htoo" (F, 40), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #163, 3/02)

"Because they [villagers] are poor, it is difficult for them to earn a living. Even though they have a shortage of food they still have to pay the porter fees. They have to work hard and they have many tears. When I see their tears I sympathise with them, but I can do nothing to help them. We are under the government's control so we can do nothing. I have faced many problems. I have a food shortage and I still have to pay the porter fees. I sympathise with other people who face more difficulties than I do." - "Saw Moo" (M, 60), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #71, 7/02)

"Now they are demanding two people to go for loh ah pay, but we [the whole village] have to pay 15,000 Kyat for one person for each month. Each month we have to pay 30,000 Kyat. Every family in the village has to give money for this; each house has to give 500 Kyat, but some houses cannot afford this so they only give 100 or 200 Kyat [per month]." - "Saw Ghay Hser" (M, 52), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview # 70, 7/02)

Other Fees

In addition to the regular forced labour fees, a number of other fees are also demanded from the villagers. Some villages are required to record the names of any outsiders who come to their village in a 'guest register'. Fifty Kyat is collected from each 'visitor' and given to the SPDC on a weekly basis along with the list of names. In this way the SPDC is able to keep track of the movements of the villagers as well as to make a little money on the side. In one village, each house is expected to pay 50 Kyat each month, or 10,000 Kyat from the whole village, for the petrol needed to run a generator at the adjacent SPDC Army camp. The villagers were also forced to buy the generator in the first place. The electricity is only for the Army camp. Some villagers have had their right to keep their traditional percussion-lock firearms taken away [see 'Restrictions'], but other villagers have been forced to register their guns and pay a fee. Each month they must go and pay 200 Kyat at the local SPDC Army camp.

"Whenever a visitor comes to the village, we have to collect money for the guest register. Each person [visitor] must pay 50 Kyat. They force us to take it to them once a week." - "Saw Toh Wah" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #23, 6/01)

"They demand the money for themselves. That money goes into their bellies." - "Saw Hla Min" (M, 40), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #40, 1/02)

"The Operations Commander demanded that we send him a generator, so we had to send him a generator. ... Later, they [SPDC] had a problem with petrol, so they demanded 10,000 Kyat to buy petrol. This makes it very expensive for us because we have to pay 40,000 Kyat each month [for the various demands forced upon them]. It is a big problem for us. It is not only that, every month each house has to also give them 1,200 Kyat for the porter fees and 50 Kyat each month for the petrol [for the generator]." - "Thra Po Lah" (M, 38), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #69, 7/02)

"They demanded that we go and pay for our gun licences [for their percussion-lock weapons]. They demand that we pay 200 Kyat for one license. They demand that we pay the 200 Kyat every month." - "Saw Kya Leh" (M, 25), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #29, 7/01)

SPDC Army units sometimes organise celebrations and sports tournaments. Although these would seem to be attempts to win over the hearts of the villagers, they are in reality simply attempts to exact more money out of the villagers. Villages are sent orders to come to the celebrations or to assemble teams to compete in the competitions. The villagers are not given the choice of whether to attend or not, they must go. Demands for fees to pay for the cost of having the celebration or competition usually accompany the 'invitation'. These 'fees' are often much more than what the cost of the celebration or competition should be, with the SPDC officers simply pocketing the rest. On December 25th 2000, the Ba La Guerrilla Retaliation Unit based in Play Hsa Loh ordered all of the villages in the area to come to their camp to compete in a volleyball tournament to entertain the soldiers stationed there. Villages were told that they would be fined 5,000 Kyat if they did not attend. Villages that did attend, but could not organise a team would also be fined 5,000 Kyat. However, those who did attend and participated in the tournament were still expected to give a 1,000 Kyat entry fee. Many of the villagers in the area are Christian and were thus unable to worship on Christmas day. Furthermore, in 2000, the Karen New Year fell on the same day. There is little chance that the significance of this day would have been lost on the SPDC. Those who did not compete were fined. while those who did compete were fined less, but were denied the freedom to celebrate religiously and culturally.

"They demanded every village [from that area] go. The people had to go and bet on the volleyball game. It was during [Karen] New Year. If a village didn't go, they were fined 5,000 Kyat. If you went, but could not play volleyball you still had to pay them 5,000 Kyat. If you went [to play] you had to pay them 1,000 Kyat. At first they had Christmas at Mwee Loh, and then they had the volleyball game at Play Hsa Loh." - "Saw Way K'Lu Say" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #38, 1/02)

"One time, they [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] had Christmas at Play Hsa Loh. They told the villagers from each village in that area to come for games. If the people didn't go they must pay 5,000 Kyat. Even if the people went, they had to give 1,000 Kyat." - "Saw Khaw" (M, 45), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #35, 1/02)

"They invited us to go and play volleyball, but if we didn't go we had to give them 5,000 Kyat. It was every village from K— up to here. It was at the time of [Karen] New Year [2000]." - "Saw Kweh Pa" (M, 41), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #46, 1/02)

Villagers must also pay to travel within the district and to go to Toungoo town. At each checkpoint the villagers have to pay a 'toll' to the soldiers manning it before being permitted to pass. Villagers in the far north of Than Daung township say that they should be able to earn twice as much if they sell their cardamom in town compared to selling it in their own village. However, whatever profits they make are lost through extortion at the many checkpoints, Army camps, and roving SPDC patrols that they encounter on the way to the market or during their return to the village. Travelling to Toungoo by car can be very expensive due to the many checkpoints along the way. Each checkpoint that the cars pass through

extorts what they can from the driver in a system of road tolls. The driver, in turn, then passes these expenses on to the passengers, raising the fare to around 1,000 Kyat to travel the 37 miles from Toungoo to Kler Lah. In contrast, the ride to Rangoon from Toungoo, which is almost five times farther, only costs half that price. The high costs incurred by having to pay 'tolls' at each of the checkpoints have kept many villagers from taking family members to the hospital there. Some villagers have died from their illnesses as a result [see 'Health and **Education**' later in this section]. Villagers who are transporting goods along the road often have to give some of their goods such as betelnut or cardamom to the soldiers at the checkpoints. Other villagers give the soldiers chickens or bottles of alcohol to get themselves and their goods through the checkpoints. This raises the transportation costs of any goods along the road. This in turn makes items that come up from the plains like pots and plates and cups, clothes, food and rice very expensive for the already

Subject: <u>Celebration of the Strategic Operations Commander's Trophy Cane Ball Competition</u>

- 1. #1 Strategic Operations Command Military Operations Command Group, Strategic Operations Commander's Trophy Cane Ball Competition will be celebrated and held on year 2002, September 28th.
- 2. Therefore, the cane ball sport players in the villages of Bawgali Gyi region who want to enter the competition organize by club, then the list of the names must be sent to Bawgali Gyi [Army] Camp on October 26th.
- 3. No limit for the quantity of clubs in each village. Organize the groups as you like, and submit the list of the names, you are informed.

<u>Stamp:</u> [Sd.] 22/10

#1 Strategic Operations Command Group
Ta Pa Ka

(For) Temporary Strategic Operations Commander

Letter #xxxx / xx / Oo x Date: Year 2002, October 22nd

Distribution

Chairperson, xxxx village

Chairperson, yyyy village

Chairperson, zzzz village

Chairperson, wwww village

Chairperson, vvvv, uuuu, tttt su see village [relocation village]

Chairperson, ssss village

Chairperson, rrrr village

Chairperson, qqqq su see village [relocation village]

Chairperson, pppp village

Chairperson, oooo village

School Headmaster, Combined Basic Education High School / mmmm

Office receipt.

File Letter

xxx / xx ***

Order #12: A translation of an order instructing the villagers to attend a cane ball competition. The villagers would have likely had to pay for setting up the competition and for the prizes awarded to the winners. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #12 in Appendix D.]

impoverished villagers in the mountains who come down to buy them in the markets of Than Daung or Kler Lah. It also makes it too expensive for many villagers to transport goods down to Toungoo and the plains to sell. This makes economic development of the region virtually impossible.

"A problem that we face is that the SPDC disturbs us when we go to sell our cardamom in the town. We could sell one viss [1.6 kgs. / 3.6 lbs.] of cardamom in the town for 5,000 Kyat, but we can sell it in our village for only 2,000 or 2,100 Kyat. If we can go and sell it in town, we will also only get about 1,000 or 2,000 Kyat because we have to pay taxes to the soldiers on the way." - "Saw Bee L'Koh" (M, 35), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #133, 12/02)

"There are checkpoints at 13 Miles [Army camp], IB #73's checkpoint at 18 Miles [Army camp], 20 Miles [Army camp], Pa Leh Wah, Kler Lah, and Kaw Thay Der. The villagers have to give them 2-300 Kyat and buy alcohol for them [the soldiers manning the checkpoints]."-"Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

"From here to Taw Oo, it is only 39 miles, but the car fare is over 1,000 Kyat. Every gate [checkpoint] asks for a lot of money from the driver. The driver must then take the money back from the passengers. The distance from Taw Oo to Rangoon is 175 miles, but the car fee is only 500 Kyat." - "Saw Ba Aye" (M, 47), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #55, 4/02)

The *Ba La* Guerrilla Retaliation Unit is particularly dictatorial in their demands and fines. According to some villagers, even the innocent act of singing attracts a 5,000 Kyat fine. The *Ba La* unit has even declared a fine for dog bites in order to extort money from the villagers. The villagers must pay if their dogs bite one of the *Ba La* soldiers. If the dogs fight each other and bite one another, the villagers must pay 5,000 Kyat for each dog involved in the fight.

"When the dogs bite them [Dam Byan Byaut Kya], they demand money from us. If the dogs bite each other, they demand 5,000 Kyat for each dog [in the fight]. If we sing a song, they demand 5,000 Kyat." - "Saw Khaw" (M, 45), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #35, 1/02)

Demands for Materials, Food and Money

"The SPDC's plan is to oppress our nationality [the Karen]. All of our belongings or money becomes theirs. We have to feed them anything they demand. We have to give it to them. We have to carry loads for them. At the moment they are holding the guns and they are oppressing the villagers. If we look at their plans, we see that it is not a government's planning; it is [the plan of] beggars and thieves." - "Saw Keh Su" (M, 50), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #30, 4/02)

In addition to the SPDC Army soldiers' regular demands for extortion money through the regular system of fees that were discussed in the previous sections, villagers in Toungoo District must also supply them with food, money, building materials, and various other items whenever they are demanded. These demands may come either through written order letters from one of the many Army camps [see "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages, Set 2003-A; Toungoo, Papun, Nyaunglebin, Thaton, Pa'an, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/ 03)], or verbally when SPDC soldiers enter a village. The extortion of money, food, building materials and other items by SPDC military units has become so pervasive in Toungoo District that it has become common operating procedure. Soldiers commonly demand rice, chickens and other foodstuffs from villagers when they enter villages. Army camps send orders telling villagers to cook meat curries for the officers and bring them to the camp. Usually nothing is paid for the rice, chickens or pigs that the soldiers eat. Soldiers enter village shops and markets and take what they want without paying. Whenever money is given, it is less than the real market price. Villagers are usually too afraid to report this to the soldiers' superiors.

"They [SPDC] come here very often. When they come, they demand food. They call themselves the government, but they look like robbers. When they come here they steal our pigs and chickens; they shoot their guns and they threaten our children." - "Saw Toh Lay" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #59, 4/02)

"They are like the children of beggars. Every group [military unit] that comes here asks for food." - "Saw Sa Min" (M, 35), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #169, 3/02)

SPDC units have been ordered to be largely selfsufficient in their food needs. In the field this has meant that they then demand whatever food they do not have enough of from the villagers. The heavy demands for food from local SPDC units have left many villagers without enough food for themselves. Many villages no longer have pigs and chickens to give the soldiers. When rice has to be sent to the soldiers, it must come from the villagers' already inadequate supply. If the villagers do not have enough rice, chickens or pigs, they must buy more to give to the SPDC soldiers. A village head, for instance, might be ordered to provide pork to a nearby Army camp. He will then search the village for a pig which he will then have to buy from the owner. Sometimes the villagers are able to pool their money together to buy the pig, other times the village head will have to pay for it himself. If there are not any pigs left in the village, the village head will have to go around to the other villages in the area in search of a pig. Once a pig is found the village head must buy it either with his own money or with the money collected from the villagers. Collecting the money from the villagers is the preferred way because the loss is then incurred by everyone and not by one person alone. However, often the villagers are so impoverished that the money can only be collected from some of the houses, and this creates tensions in the village. In May 2002, one of the Dam Byan Byaut Kya commanders entered a village in Tantabin township and demanded to eat a pig. A suitable 'small' pig which would have been worth 30,000 Kyat in the local markets at that time was then slaughtered and prepared for the soldiers. Afterwards, the rest of the village contributed and the collected money was given to the owner of the pig so as to soften the blow of the loss.

"I know Captain Soe Myint from IB #30. In the past he told me to take him a pig. It weighed 28 viss [46 kgs. / 100 lbs.] and would have been worth more than 10,000 Kyat. They did not give me any money." - "Saw Nay Min" (M, 34), forcibly relocated village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #7, 11/00)

"We work for ourselves, but it is not for us, it all goes to them. We have to work for their food first, and then we must work for our food afterwards.... If the villagers harvest 25 durians, the SPDC takes twelve durians. If we are going to eat a pig, we can only eat half and give them half. So, all of our things become their things."-"Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)

"The last time that the guerrilla group [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] entered the village, they forced the village head to find one pig. The village head had to find one, but he couldn't. The village head

told them that he couldn't find one, but they forced him to find one. The commander said, 'It is impossible for you not to give me a pig. Whenever I enter a village, the villagers must find some pork for me.' The villagers had to find him a small pig so that he would be satisfied. That pig weighed 20 viss [32 kgs./72 lbs.]. They didn't pay for it; we had to ask the villagers. We collected money from each house in the village and the village head then gave it to the owner of the pig. That was on May 19th 2002." - "Naw Hsa Maw" (F, 48), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #67, 7/02)

"We are afraid of them, so we try to give them what they demand. When they want pork, we arrange it for them. When they want chicken, we arrange it for them. When they want people [for forced labour], we give them to them. [That way] we can stay in the village." - "Saw Maw Shwe" (M, 39), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #14, 4/01)

The villagers can do little but comply when the soldiers state their demands. Many villagers have told KHRG researchers that they fear they will be relocated if they do not fulfill the demands of the soldiers. Villagers who protest when the soldiers come to the village and take things are often threatened with direct bodily harm. Soldiers point at them with their rifles or show the villagers their knives or landmines in an obvious threat as to what will happen to them if they do not give what is demanded. Village heads and some villagers who have been unable to give the soldiers what they want have been arrested and beaten by the soldiers [see 'Killings, Arrests and Torture'].

"They demand betelnut during the betelnut harvest and they demand durian and mangoes during the durian and mango harvests. They demand food as they wish. They don't respect the civilians' belongings. They take them as though they were their own. They use whatever they want to use. All troops demand this. There are no troops who don't demand things. Their job is to demand and to use [the civilians]. They demand betelnut and durian. Whenever they want wood or bamboo, we must give it to them. If we don't give it to them, they will punish us. They shoot whatever they want to shoot, and they do whatever they want to do; they do not ask, they just shoot whatever they want to shoot. Whether the villagers agree or not is not important." - "Saw Ba Aye" (M, 47), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #55, 4/02)

"They demand food. Some of the troops demand nicely and some of the troops demand badly. They shoot their guns in the village. When they came to demand bread, cheroots, and tealeaves from the shop, he [the shop owner] didn't give it to them, so they fired their guns in front of his shop. 'Ta Ta Ta Ta Ta'. Then he was afraid and gave them the bread and cheroots." - "Saw K'Baw" (M, 43), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #16, 4/01)

"They threatened the people when they demanded food. When the villagers didn't give them anything, they spoke to them very badly. They said that if the villagers did not give them [what they wanted], they were going to burn the house and kill the owner. They demanded pork and chicken, and they also demanded alcohol, slippers, and shirts." - "Saw Thay Myo" (M, 48), villager from Y— village, Tantabin township (Interview #80, 4/01)

"They said that if the people could not give them [what they demanded], the villagers must leave the village. The people would not be able to work in their area or place [they would be forcibly relocated]." - "Saw Htoo Pa" (M, 35), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #5, 10/00)

Much of the food that is demanded from the villagers goes to the officers' table. Very little of it is given to the private soldiers. Some corrupt officers and sergeants have even been known to sell off the soldiers' rations leaving them very little to eat. As a result, theft from the villagers by the privates is common. The officers rarely punish the soldiers, even if the villagers complain. Much of the theft occurs at night because the soldiers from the nearby camps are too embarrassed to steal from the villagers in daylight. When soldiers enter a village while on a patrol through the hills the situation can be and often is very different, especially among the more undisciplined units. Soldiers often loot the villagers' rice and poultry at gun point. At other times they order the villagers to cook curries for them. The villagers have little choice but to comply. Many officers exert little control over their soldiers at these times. The food is almost never paid for, and villagers have claimed that the soldiers even took the villagers' plates which they had just eaten off of with them. In an extreme incident in early 2001, a group of SPDC medics entered a village in Tantabin township under the premise that they were there to treat the villagers. The soldiers gave injections to a number of the villagers, claiming that they were there to help them. These injections however were not medications at all, but tranquilizers. Once the tranquilizers took effect and those who were injected lost consciousness, the soldiers returned and stole a sack of betelnut from their homes.

"The troops out on patrol come to our village very often. They demand to eat. They demand to eat rice, salt, fishpaste, and monosodium glutamate when they arrive here. When they ask for it, they say that they will pay, but they don't. When they go back, they take our plates. My niece had a bracelet and when they went back, they took it also. They steal our things. When they come here they steal our machetes, cups, pots, and plates. Every time that they come here, they steal a little bit when they go back. Every group [acts in this way]." - "Naw Eh Kri Mu" (F, 50), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #112, 3/02)

"When they come here, they demand to eat rice. They come here and eat our animals, and they demand things from the shops without paying any money. If we cannot answer them, they threaten us and show us their mines and their knives." - "Naw Paw Htoo" (F, 27), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #60, 4/02)

"I don't know why, but they come to the village. What we have seen is that when they come to the village, they don't have their rations and they demand food from the villagers. We have to cook it for them. They demand chickens and they also go and kill the chickens; they don't pay for them – after they eat, they just leave. They steal the chickens. Even though we give it to them, they go to the lower part of the village or under the houses and steal the pigs and chickens as well."

- "Saw Y'Gaw Ko" (M, 35), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #132, 12/02)

"They demand food from the villagers. If they can't demand it, they take it by force. They took our chickens and ducks. They took about seventy or eighty [of them]." - "Saw Htoo Pa" (M,?), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #5, 10/00)

"In 2001 their [SPDC] medics came here to treat the villagers one night and gave my grandparents injections to make them sleep. When they were asleep, they went back and stole one bag of beteInut." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 19), internally displaced villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

When SPDC units have been ambushed or suffered casualties because of KNLA landmines, the soldiers sometimes go to the nearest village and take everything that they can in revenge. They also shoot any of the poultry or livestock that they come across. To the soldiers, the ambush or the landmine explosion never would have happened if the villagers had told them about the danger, so the villagers must be working with the resistance and the looting is justified. SPDC Army deserters have told KHRG in the past that officers have told their soldiers that it is all right to loot the villagers' things because the

villagers are helping the KNU and the KNU is their enemy, so the villagers are also their enemy.

"The people [KNLA] shot at them [SPDC] when we were in a hill field once. After this, they [SPDC] took all of the villagers' things from the hill field [as retaliation for the attack]. ... They took everything that they saw in the hut. ... When they see the villagers, they kill them, so the villagers flee and hide." - "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)

"The fighting occurred so we fled and stayed in the jungle for two weeks. They [SPDC] came in to our village and ate our livestock. They could not demand it from the villagers because we fled when the fighting began." - "Saw Soe Win" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #18, 1/02)

Villagers are sometimes forced to buy things from the soldiers. Some units sell off their inferior rice and other foodstuffs which they get from the Army as their rations and then demand better rice for free from the villagers. The officers dictate what prices are to be paid for the rice and other foodstuffs. The

To:

prices are often far higher than the local market rate. Villagers are forced to buy inferior rice at often grossly inflated prices. In April 2000, SPDC soldiers from IB #75 ordered villagers from a village in Tantabin township to carry rice to Pa Leh Wah where the soldiers would sell it at the market for their commanding

officers. The rice was likely from the soldiers' own rations. The profiteering soldiers accompanying the villagers kept some of the money from the sale and blamed the villagers for the discrepancy, accusing them of stealing the rice and keeping the money for themselves. Those villagers were then forced to repay the money that the soldiers had in fact stolen from their commanding officers. Soldiers from IB #73, who man the checkpoint at 18 Miles on the Toungoo to Mawchi road, have forced villagers to buy noodles and alcohol before being permitted to

pass. Each bottle of alcohol was sold for 500 Kyat and even villagers who did not drink still had to pay

300 Kyat before they were allowed to continue on their way. The villagers claimed to not even enjoy the noodles which they were forced to pay extortionately high prices for, but had to buy them nonetheless, owing to the fact that they were made by one of the commander's wives. Other officers, such as Major Shan Lwin of IB #264 have forced some of the villagers to buy items from him that have already exceeded their expiry dates. The officer who sent Order #13 below is probably selling off his battalion's rations and is in effect ordering the villagers to come and buy them.

"[In 2000], we carried rice to Pa Leh Wah where the soldiers and NCOs had to sell it [for the officers]. They took two sacks of rice [100 kgs./220 lbs.], three viss [5 kgs./11 lbs.] of sugar, and one tin of milk. They sold it [and kept the profits for themselves] and accused us of stealing it. Later, we had to pay them back for the two sacks of rice." - "Naw Wee Wee" (F, 51), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #79, 4/01)

"At the IB #73 gate [checkpoint] they demand many things from us when we arrive at the gate. The commander's wife sells noodles there, and

> when we arrive there they force us to buy her noodles. Her noodles are expensive and we don't like them. noodles do not taste nice. ... They sell alcohol and the villagers have to buy it. If the villagers don't buy the alcohol, they [SPDC] get angry at the villagers. The villagers who don't drink

30-5-2002 U *aaaa*

Chairperson (xxxx [village])

As soon as [you] receive this letter now, come to meet with the column commander at xxxx [camp] today morning to arrive at 09:30 hours.

[We] Have rice / milk tins / beans / oil / sugar to sell, so the people who will buy it come with money.

Wait at xxxx Hall.

[Sd.] Major bbbb

Order #13: A translation of an order demanding that the villagers purchase goods from the SPDC Army soldiers. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #13 in Appendix D.]

alcohol have to pay 300 Kyat, and the villagers who do drink alcohol have to pay 500 Kyat." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 18), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

Villagers are also often ordered to buy items like alcohol, cheroots, sugar and tinned milk for the soldiers. Sometimes the soldiers give the village head money to do this with and other times they promise to pay, but when the items are delivered, no money is given. One of the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) from the *Ba La* Guerrilla Retaliation Unit named Thein Ngai has on a number of separate

occasions instructed villagers to go to the market in a neighbouring village for him, giving them the money with which to buy the goods. Upon returning from the market, goods in hand, Thein Ngai then asks to have his money returned to him, effectively forcing the villagers to pay for the goods for him.

"They stay in their camp and we have to go and buy things for them from Kler Lah and bring them back for them. They don't give us any money. They give us their milk and we have to carry it back and sell it to the villagers. The villagers don't want it and say 'it is already out of date'. I tell them that they must buy it; if we don't buy it, it will be a problem for us." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), forcibly relocated village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"Thein Ngai ordered me to buy some vegetables for him and gave me 1,500 Kyat. I bought it for him, but then he demanded the 1,500 Kyat [back]."- "Saw Kler Htoo" (M, 38), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #41, 1/02)

"Thein Ngai then told me to go and get some things for him and he gave me 2,000 Kyat [with which to buy them]. I went to buy the things for him, such as duck eggs, long beans, eggplant, and a hat. When I got back, he asked for his 2,000 Kyat back. I didn't have any money ... but I [still] had to go back and see him. I searched for it and paid him back his 2,000 Kyat along with one viss [1.6 kgs. / 3.6 lbs.] of pork." - "Saw Aye Min" (M, 38), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #19, 4/01)

These ad hoc demands end up costing the villagers a staggering amount of money; money that they simply do not have. Some of the demands exacted upon the villagers of Toungoo District amount to being more money that what an average villager, earning

300 Kyat a day, would make in months. In the cases described below, the two pigs demanded from "Saw Soe Win" and his son would have been worth 90,000 and 37,500 Kyat respectively at local market prices. "Saw Soe Win" alone would have lost the equivalent of ten months worth of wages in this single incident.

"They ate our chickens, pigs, and everything. They ate my pig. They ate one pig of mine and another one of my son's. My pig [would have] weighed sixty viss [98 kgs. / 216 lbs.]. They ate one pig and four chickens [from my son]. [His] pig would have weighed 25 viss [41 kgs. / 90 lbs.] ... They shot it and ate it. After they ate, they left." - "Saw Soe Win" (M, 55), deputy secretary from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #18, 4/01)

"When they came along the path, they saw my cows and then he fined me one cow. He [Major Myint Zaw] said, 'I must eat a cow.' My cow was a male bull and I didn't want to give it to him, so I told him that I would go and buy him a female cow from the plains area. He demanded to eat the bull. They wanted to eat the male. Then I went to the plains area and I bought a female cow for them. It cost 17,000 Kyat, and also ordered some other things as well. I also had to buy them oil, sticky rice, and cigarettes. The cow and the other things cost me 33,000 Kyat. They didn't give me any money for it. I had to borrow the money from other people because he did not even give me one Kyat." - "Saw Lu Mu" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #39, 1/02)

"We have to go and borrow [money] from other people. We owe more and more each day. I can't pay them back. I still owe people [money] now."
- "Saw Pa Thaw" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #114, 3/02)



This vehicle was commandeered by the SPDC to carry rice to outlying Army camps along the Bu Sah Kee car road. [KHRG]

Health and Education

"They [SPDC] don't do anything for us. We had to build the school ourselves. The SPDC Army camp is close to us and they came and saw that we were building the school ourselves, but they didn't do anything to help. They don't do anything for us. We have to rely on each other. We never have enough for our school. The SPDC knows that we need help, but they don't do anything for us."

- "Saw Y'Gaw Ko" (M, 35), village head from xxxx village. Than Daung township (Interview #132, 12/02)

The SPDC provides very little for the health of the Nyein Chan Yay villagers. There is only one clinic in the mountains of Toungoo District at Kler Lah. There is a doctor there and some nurses, but very little medicine. The usual practice here is that the doctor will write up a prescription and the villagers must then go outside the clinic and buy the medicine at a shop and bring it back to be administered. There is also a hospital in Toungoo, but this is a much more expensive option. Villagers who want to go there must first travel down the road from Kler Lah to Toungoo, paying the fees demanded at each of the checkpoints along the way [see 'Other Fees' in 'Fees, Extortion and Looting']. Once they arrive at the 'People's Hospital' in Toungoo, they must pay for service or they will not even be admitted.

"The villagers who have money can send them [to Toungoo]. The villagers who do not have money, like us, suffer and die. [If you have] no money, you must wait and wait, and die. We can't send them [to Toungoo]." - "Saw Thay Myo" (M, 48), villager from Y— village, Tantabin township (Interview #80, 4/01)

"When they [the villagers] get sick, we have to send them to Taw Oo. Taking them to Taw Oo is difficult, as some of them may die on the way. We have to keep some of them in the hand of God. If they die, they die, and if they live, they live. Most of them die." - "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)

Villagers who cannot afford to seek treatment in Kler Lah or Toungoo must remain in their village and resort to using traditional herbal medicines from ingredients that are readily available to them in the jungle such as roots and various leaves. Many of these remedies prove to be inadequate and many villagers die due to inadequate treatment. Medicine is available in some of the bigger villages, but it is expensive. Even if villagers can afford it, the SPDC's prohibition on the carrying of medicine makes it dangerous to go and buy it and carry it back to the village [see 'Restrictions']. Villagers are usually unable to buy enough medicine to give a sick person a full course because they are afraid of carrying too much medicine in case they are stopped by SPDC soldiers.

The acute lack of food that is confronting the vast majority of villagers in Toungoo District is having serious implications upon their health [see 'Food Security']. The amount of food which villagers are able to eat each day does not provide them with enough vitamins and nutrients to stave off infection. Diseases related to nutrition such as malnutrition, anaemia, diarrhoea, dysentery, and beriberi are common. All of these diseases are both easily preventable and treatable, but with no medical supplies, few trained medics and inadequate public health and sanitation knowledge, the villagers continue to be plagued by these diseases. Many villagers have died from diseases and infections that could easily have been cured.

"The most common diseases that the villagers there have to face are malaria, diarrhoea and dysentery, and the common cold. In June 2003 there was an epidemic of respiratory infection [influenza] and many children were coughing a lot. When we went to the church, we could not hear the pastor's speech because the children were coughing so much." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

"The most common diseases that they face are respiratory infections [influenza], malnutrition, anaemia, malaria, diarrhoea, measles, and beriberi." - "Saw Thaw Kee" (M, 30), Karen relief worker (Interview #196, 8/03)

The geographic isolation of Toungoo District makes it very difficult for outside aid to reach the villagers. The trek from Thailand can take weeks to complete because the relief workers must traverse the free fire zones of southern Karenni State or those of northern Papun district. The length and difficulty of such a journey means that external assistance only arrives sporadically. Karen relief organisations are able to visit the area only once every six months to provide the villagers and IDPs with medicines and food. However, due to SPDC activity, these groups are unable to reach all of those in need. Furthermore. each of these organisations is only able to give a maximum of 25 kilograms (55 lbs.) of rice to each family for a six month period. While this is welcomed, it is only a small fraction of the total amount of rice that a family would eat in six months. There are also

several mobile medical teams in Toungoo District. Each of these teams must care for as many as 2,000 patients (villagers and IDPs). The teams travel into the area once every six months, treating those who they can get access to in the time that they are there. Prior to returning to Thailand, they leave behind stockpiles of medicines so that the villagers and IDPs can receive treatment in the time until the teams return. None of the relief organisations that work within Toungoo District are able to travel to all areas. In certain areas, the SPDC presence is so strong that they would be placing themselves at even greater risk if they were to attempt to travel into those areas. Should any of them be seen by the SPDC, they would be shot on site.

"The SPDC do not come and take care of the villagers. Sometimes if there is an emergency, the Karen side [KNU] will come." - "Saw Eh K'Mu" (M, 51), village secretary from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #22, 4/01)

"[The backpack medics] go there three times a year. They can go to almost every village in the district. They also go to the [internally] displaced villagers. At the beginning of the year they went to Maw Nay Pwa area, in the middle of the year they went to the Kho Kee area, and at the end of the year they will go to Than Daung township.""Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

"One backpack [medic] team must take care of 2,000 patients. The backpack teams go in every six months ... and supply them with medicine so that the [healthcare] workers who work there can take care of the villagers. Sometimes if they don't have any more medicine they use herbal medicine and try to buy medicine from the town." - "Saw Thaw Kee" (M, 30), Karen relief worker (Interview #196, 8/03)

Most Nyein Chan Yay villages in Toungoo District have a small school where the villagers can at least obtain a primary education. Villagers who do not have a school in their own village send their children to the school in a neighbouring one. Few of these schools extend beyond Fourth Standard (Grade 4). All schools found in Toungoo District are understaffed, underfunded, and desperately short of resources. The teachers themselves are often poorly educated, with many of them only having a Fourth or Fifth Standard (Grade) education themselves. There are only a handful of schools in the district where students may complete Tenth Standard (Grade 10), although few villagers can afford to pursue such an education. The increasing costs of schooling are driving even an elementary education of Fourth Standard beyond the means of many.

The schools in many of the larger villages were established by the SPDC in the name of 'development', although most of the money used to build the schools was extorted from the villagers. Building materials are usually demanded from the villagers who are also ordered to build the schools. The SPDC pays for the salaries of the teachers they provide but very little else. Most of the smaller villages establish and administer their own schools so that they too can give an education to their children. The SPDC provides these schools with nothing. The villagers commonly supplement the teachers' salaries with rice and other crops because the majority of them are too impoverished to pay the wages of the teachers in addition to the regular system of fees that they are also expected to pay to the SPDC.

Education in the SPDC schools is heavily regimented and censored. The SPDC does not allow the teaching of Karen in its schools. Classes are conducted in Burmese, from Burmese-language textbooks. Often, the only way for a child to learn to read and write their native language is from their parents or private tuition. The study of politics, particularly the study of democracy, is strictly forbidden. Karen history is not allowed to be taught either. The students are only taught a much-distorted version of Burmese history, where Burma, under the rule of the SPDC has supposedly prospered. Only in the village-run schools are the children able to learn some Karen. These schools are set up and run by the villagers themselves, so the villagers decide what their children will study.

"They do not allow us to write about Karen history. They cannot teach about democracy. The people can only learn about their [SPDC] work. If we do not praise them, but instead say that they are wrong, we are sent to prison. Recently, they have paid a lot of attention to the children so that they can change their [the children's] opinion of the SPDC and so that they have to rely on them [SPDC]." - "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)

"There are no Karen text books. This school is a Burmese school, so they teach Burmese and English. They don't teach the Karen language." - "Saw Ta Pla" (M, 21), forcibly relocated village secretary from xxxx village (Interview #27, 7/01)

"They gave us permission to learn the Karen language before, but now they don't give us permission to learn Karen. The teachers can only teach the Burmese language. Now, children who grow up cannot read Karen, they can only read Burmese." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 18), villager from K—village (Interview #81, 4/01)

"The SPDC built our school. There are four standards. The SPDC assigned the teacher; [she] is from L—. They are allowed to learn Karen, but they don't. The teacher doesn't understand Karen very well so she cannot teach it." - "Saw Cho Htwe" (M, 32), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (#03-18-6, interviewed on 12/02)

The school year in most schools is limited, on average only three months per year. It is quite common for students to have classes for only one week out of every four. Many teachers are absent for much of the year, tending to other commitments such as cultivating their fields. At various times of the year, the students themselves are also unavailable to study because they must help out in the fields. During the harvest, everyone must pitch in and work alongside the rest of their family in the fields trying to harvest all of the food that they can in the limited time they have available to them.

"They [the students] can't learn well. The SPDC does not allow us to teach Karen. They can learn for only three months per year." - "Saw Say Neh" (M, 40), village secretary from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #142, 12/02)

"They [the students] can't learn very well. They can learn only for three or four months a year.""Saw Kar Wah" (M, 35), villager from xxxx village,
Than Daung township (Interview #141, 12/02)

"They [the students] can only learn one week per month. The teacher doesn't teach very well. [The teacher] goes over here and over there, so the children can't learn very well." - "Saw Pa Say Lah" (M, 48), villager from L— village, Than Daung township (Interview #192, 12/02)

Few of the parents have aspirations that their children will become doctors, teachers, or other professionals; the vast majority are more concerned with trying to put enough food on their plates and raise enough money to pay the fees demanded by the SPDC. Even if they had such aspirations, there is very little chance that their children would be able to meet them within the present environment in Karen State under the SPDC. Some SPDC soldiers have told villagers that they will not amount to anything more than being a hill farmer regardless of whether they study or not. Regrettably, this is not too far from the reality in the current situation. Faced with the realities of this, most villagers no longer pursue a comprehensive education, concentrating instead on finding enough food for their next meal. Other villagers stop studying upon reaching an age when they are strong enough to work in the fields alongside their family members. For the Nyein Chan Yay villagers of Toungoo District, the need to eat supersedes the need for an education.

"Most of them [children] can learn, but most of the people don't go to school. Most of the children stop learning when they can read a little bit." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG field researcher (Interview #3, 8/02)

"They [SPDC] told them, 'If you study you will eat rice, and if you do not study you will still eat rice.' The people who get paid a salary cannot earn any more than a schoolteacher. As for me, I have passed tenth standard, [but] there are no chances for me. The only thing we have is to come back and work in our village. Yet, we cannot work freely because of the SPDC's oppression. We must stay under their hand." - "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)



This group of villagers from Than Daung township were arrested and forced to porter loads for the SPDC as they were returning from their hill field.

[KHRG]

IV. Ywa Bone Villages

"The SPDC came and oppressed us, so our villagers had to flee and stay in the jungle. I have stayed here [in the jungle] for one year already. We can't work very well because the Burmese Army comes and disturbs us so we can't work. We can plant only one or two big tins of [paddy] seeds. ... We have had to flee and stay in the jungle every year. We can't work. We don't have any food anymore. We owe people money. We are sick and it causes problem for us. We have to stay in the jungle. We can have a hill field, but we can only make a small hill field. When they [SPDC] come here they disturb us and destroy our things so we can't make our hill field very well. This is a big problem for us. We have to stay in the jungle and we don't have a house to stay in. We have to flee and stay like the birds and the chickens. We have to move our place every day." - "Saw A'La Chit" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #188, 11/02)

The villagers who do not live in the SPDC controlled areas are known in Burmese as Ywa Bone or 'Hiding' villagers. No longer able to withstand the demands forced upon them by the SPDC or unwilling to move to a relocation site when ordered to, many villagers have chosen a life of flight and live nomadically in the dense forests which cling to the steep hillsides. By living outside of the zone of SPDC control, these villagers are viewed by the SPDC as enemies who are aiding the KNU/ KNLA. They must constantly live in fear of SPDC military units that are sent periodically into the mountains to hunt them down. Whenever an SPDC patrol draws near, they must gather what they can of their few meagre possessions and literally run for their lives. Most of the internally displaced villagers live in the area between the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road and the Toungoo-Mawchi road, and west of the Yaw Loh River in Tantabin township, and the area to the east of the Day Loh and Klay Loh rivers in Than Daung township.

"I have to suffer many things. I don't have enough food, my children can't learn, our fruit plantations were destroyed and we can't look after them. The SPDC government are not good people. The SPDC always says that they are good people and that they are doing good things for development, but they are not good. They oppress the civilians, they kill the civilians, and they do many things to the civilians. They don't fight their enemies [KNU], they fight their own civilians. They think that if our people can't stay [in their homes], then they will be lost [destroyed]. Whatever they do, our people will never be lost." - "Saw Ler Kee" (M, 35), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #187, 11/02)

"They are not Nyein Chan Yay [Peace] villagers, just Ywa Bone [Hiding] villagers. They always have to flee and stay like that [in hiding]. ... If they don't face the SPDC troops, the SPDC Army will shoot them if they see them. They have fled to stay in the jungle, so if the Burmese [troops]

see them, they will not let them live. ... They always have to be ready. If there is any fighting they have to take their things and flee. This is why they must always be ready. They always have to be aware." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

Q: "Why have you fled from your village to live in the jungle?"

A: "Because of the SPDC. When they see us, they will shoot us dead. They beat and torture us, so we dare not to stay." - "Saw Po Thu" (M, 37), internally displaced villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #86, 7/01)

Karen relief organisations that provide relief to the internally displaced villagers estimate that there are between 5,000 and 6,000 internally displaced villagers hiding in each of Toungoo District's two townships. Many of the villagers fled their villages when SPDC forces moved into their area because they did not dare to face the soldiers. Others who were ordered to move to relocation sites, fled to live in the forest near the villages. Still others went to the relocation sites and then fled when the lack of adequate food and the constant forced labour became too much for them [see 'Forced Relocation'].

"In that area, I guess that there would be over 5,000 people. This is only from the villages which were destroyed. This is only from Tantabin township; over 5,000 people." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

"For the whole district there might be 9,000 or 10,000 IDPs. There might even be more than that. There are about 6,000 IDPs in Tantabin township, and another 6,000 in Than Daung township. We can get to the people in Tantabin township, but we cannot get to everyone in Than Daung township [to provide them with aid]. We cannot get in to the people who live to the west of the

Day Loh River who stay near the SPDC, nor can we get in to the villages near Ler Ker Der Koh. Wah Baw Day or Wah Soe." - "Saw Thaw Kee" (M, 30), Karen relief worker (Interview #196, 8/03)

"[We have to stay in the jungle], because they [SPDC] ordered us to carry loads for them and they ordered us to stay in the place that they nominated [in the relocation site]. They [SPDC] ordered us to relocate often, but we didn't want to relocate, so [now] we try and live in the jungle." - "Saw Kloh Law" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from K- village, Than Daung township (Interview #144, 11/00)

"[In] 1997, the Burmese Army came and burned our village. We couldn't stay in our village anymore. We had to stay in the jungle. We had to run up and down [to avoid SPDC patrols]. Our villagers need peace in our country. I have already stayed in the jungle for three [five] years. We are faced with illnesses and we don't have enough food. I have to go to Than Daung Gyi to

buy food. I have to walk for two days [in order to do so]." -"Saw Kaw Po" (M, 30), internally displaced villager from M— village. Than Daung township (Interview #151, 1/02)

M 0 s t internally displaced villagers live in groups of two to four families in

villagers, so villagers do not wait for the soldiers to arrive, but flee as soon as they hear a gunshot or a landmine explode, nearby or not.

villagers must be ready to run at any time. SPDC

soldiers routinely shoot at internally displaced

"We have to stay in the jungle. We have to move from place to place often. I have had to do this for many years." - "Saw Eh Law Kaw Ko" (M, 53), internally displaced villager from D- village, Than Daung township (Interview #147, 3/01)

"The villagers who don't face the SPDC don't gather together and go back to stay in their village as they did before. Right now they are staying in their betelnut plantations. One family stays here, and one family stays there. They have separated and don't all stay together. If they all go back and stay together in their village, when the SPDC Army comes and sees that, they are going to burn it [the village] again. The villagers have this problem. If they [SPDC] know that the villagers have gone back to stay in their village,

you have to understand that they [SPDC] will come and burn it again. If they [the villagers] go back and rebuild their houses, and then the SPDC comes and burns it again, after that they will rebuild again and the SPDC will come and burn it



Villagers from Tantabin township taking flight into the forest in June 2003 ahead of an advancing SPDC column. [KHRG]

hiding places in the forest. The small groups make it more difficult for the SPDC soldiers to find them. When the villagers first flee their villages they build tent-like shelters of sticks or bamboo and leaves to live in. If they are able to stay in one place long enough, they build more permanent shelters with bamboo walls and leaf or cut bamboo roofs. In a few sites the KNLA is able to provide some small measure of security, but in most it is the villagers who post lookouts to watch out for approaching SPDC columns. If a column is sighted, the lookouts will run back and warn the villagers. Most lookouts are unarmed and many have been shot dead by the SPDC troops. No matter what kinds of provisions are made for their security, the internally displaced

again. ... The villagers can't go back and work as they did before. They have to flee and stay over here and over there. Four or five families stay together. They are scattered like that." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

Karen villagers have very strong ties to their land and prefer to live on the run in the forest nearby their village rather than move to a relocation site. Internally displaced villagers usually flee to places within walking distance of their old village so that they can go back and work at least a part of their fields. Rice is stored in hidden caches in the forest. If the SPDC military presence becomes too heavy in the area of

their original village, the villagers move to an area farther away and try to start new fields. Flight to a refugee camp in Thailand is not a real option because of the distance to the Thai border and the many landmines and SPDC columns that have to be avoided on the way. Some villagers are eventually able to rebuild their villages and begin living in them again, although they still have to run from SPDC soldiers when they come. Eventually the village becomes more stable and the SPDC may start treating it as a village again and issuing orders to it rather than hunting down the inhabitants. This, however, usually only lasts until the next relocation campaign when the villagers again have to chose whether to move or flee into the forest. This cycle has happened many times over the years for the villages in the area to the north and northeast of Kler Lah.

"We have to face a lot of problems in our lives. We have to go and stay in the jungle; we can't stay in our village. Before, we had our village, but they came and demanded food. Now if they came to the village they would demand food and then arrest us. We have to avoid them. If we don't avoid them they threaten our villagers in many ways." - "Saw Ti Mi" (M, 30), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #161, 3/02)

"Everyone knows that if you stay in the jungle, it is not an easy life. We have to face a lot of problems. We want to go back and stay in our village. If they [SPDC] knew that we went back to stay in the village, they would come back again. They would torture us again, and we

would have to stay like this [back in the jungle], so we do not dare to go back and stay in the village."- "Saw Pee Thay" (M, 33), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #160, 3/02)

"The place where we stay is not stable. Sometimes we can eat and sometimes we don't have any food to eat. We can't work well. We have to take care of our own security as well. We have to move very often. This is why we can't work very well. ... It is very difficult to stay in this area because we don't have any security. It causes problems for the villagers. The children can't learn. We see that in every corner of our lives, we are sloping down [getting worse] in everything. We are in need. We are poor in [terms of] education, health, economy, and social duties and obligations. If this area has peace, we will have to find a way for our children to learn. If we do this the civilians will have knowledge and they will open their eyes. Right now, because the civilians have to stay like this, the civilians don't have any knowledge. There is no unity anymore. My objective is to light the wick that is in the hearts of the civilians who stay in the dark." -"Naw Ta Ta" (F, 26), internally displaced villager from D— village, Than Daung township (Interview #189, 11/02)

"I pity my children because I cannot look after them well..."

"I don't get enough food from my work. I don't have enough food for my children. I want to send my eldest child to school but I can't, so I had to ask him to leave school. We have to live and work day by day and we don't get enough food. I owe money to other people. This is why my family is faced with a lot of problems. In the past I sent my son and my daughter to school in Taw Oo [Toungoo], but now I can't send them there anymore. I have called all of them to the jungle. My husband is already dead. The Burmese [soldiers] killed my husband and now I am a widow and I have to stay with my children. The soldier who killed my husband was one of the guerrilla troops [Dam Byan Byaut Kya]. My husband died because of the SPDC. I have to work for the food for my children. I can't do anything and I have had to ask my son to leave school. He wants to go to school but I can't do anything. My younger children want to go to Taw Oo to learn, but I can't send them to school. It is because I have to be both their mother and their father. I pity my children because I cannot look after them well." - "Naw Paw Htoo Htoo" (F, 40), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #163, 3/02)

Destruction of Property and Looting

"Ever since our parents', and grandmothers' and grandfathers' time, they have been coming here and torturing us. Now we do not dare to stay in the village. We have had to flee and stay here [in the jungle]. When they [SPDC] see us, they will kill us. ... If we stayed in our village, they would tie us up, torture us, and beat us until they killed us. We can't suffer like that so we must flee. Whenever they arrive at a village, they take everything that they see. They take the pigs and chickens. They carry it with them, and if they can't carry it, they destroy it. All of the food that they see, they destroy. They burn down the houses. They have destroyed the villagers' belongings." - "Saw Tay Kee" (M, 55), internally displaced villager from P— village, Tantabin Township (Interview #83, 6/01)

The SPDC has routinely used the destruction of villages in its ongoing effort to flush the villagers out of the hills and into the areas under their control. The idea appears to be that if the villagers do not have a house to return to, they will then come down to live in the relocation sites and villages under SPDC control. Villages that have been moved to relocation sites are usually looted and burned after the villagers have left. Other villages in areas which the SPDC has little or no control over are burned when SPDC columns pass through the area. Sometimes SPDC military units place landmines in the deserted villages to keep the villagers from coming back and living in them [see 'Landmines']. An added reason for the landmining of the villages is that it does not produce as much evidence for human rights researchers to take photographs of. Whether the SPDC burns the villages or keeps the villagers out with landmines, it only has the effect of further terrorising the villagers. Most villagers would rather live in a small bamboo and leaf shelter than go down to live under the SPDC.

"The Burmese burned the house and it felt like the fire burned my heart. I couldn't sleep that night. We had to run from place to place. I [only] took one bowl [1.6 kgs./3.5 lbs.] of rice with us. We ate it all, but then where could we go? We did not dare to go back and get more food." - "Naw Wee Wee" (F, 51), internally displaced villager from H— village, Tantabin township (Interview #79, 4/01)

"In places like Saw Tay Der, Pway Baw Der, and up to Hi Daw Kaw, all of those villages have been destroyed a long time ago. The people left and went to stay in the jungle. They go to stay among the bushes and in their hill fields. All of the villagers there don't go back to stay in their villages anymore." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG field researcher (Interview #3, 8/02)

Villagers living along the route of the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road were forced to flee their villages in 1995 when the then-SLORC took control of the area and began building the road. After the villagers fled, the soldiers went through the area and burned the

villages in 1995, 1996 and 1997. The villagers were first forced to flee their villages to the east of the Yaw Loh River in the area between the road route and the old Kler Lah-Mawchi road. The soldiers then began burning the villages to the west of the Yaw Loh River. The villagers on both sides of the Yaw Loh River have been living on the run in the forest ever since. In March 1997, the SPDC launched a campaign of village destruction to the east of the Day Loh and Yaw Loh rivers. Sixteen villages in the area were relocated, most of which were then destroyed. Many of these villagers later escaped from the relocation sites and fled back into the forests. While there have not been any major village destruction campaigns in the district since 1997, SPDC military units still burn down the villages of villagers who do not live under SPDC control, and the hiding sites of internally displaced villagers when they make their periodic sweeps through the hills.

"Between Kaw Thay Der and Bu Sah Kee, the villages [which have been forced to flee] are Ku Lu Der, Hsaw Wah Der, Maw Thay Der, Law Bee Ler, Per Loh, Khaw Du Htoe, Si Kheh Der, Plaw Mu Der, Ta Kwee Soe, Bu Sah Kee, Tha Aye Kee, Ha Toh Per, Thay Ku Der, Wa Soe, Sho Ser, Hi Daw Kaw, Kho Kee, Klay Kee, Thay Kee, and Bu Kee. Then they [SPDC] came up along the Western side of the car road beyond the Yaw Loh River to Si Daw Ko, Pway Baw Der, Saw Mu Der, Ko Lu, Saw Tay Der, and S'Wah Daw Koh. These villages have all been destroyed since the SPDC started building the [Kaw Thay Der to Bu Sah Kee] car road in 1995. ... They were destroyed in 1995, 1996, and 1997. It was during these three years that all of these villages were destroyed. They went and burned them again and again." -"Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

"In the area to the east of the Day Loh [River] and the east of the Klay Loh [River], most of the villages have been destroyed." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG Field Researcher (Interview #3, 8/02)

"In 1997, the SPDC came to the east of the Day Loh River and burned the houses. They burned all of the huts, rice barns, hill fields, and plantations. They burned everything that they saw. We have no house to stay in." - "Naw Ta Ta" (F, 26), internally displaced villager from D— village, Than Daung township (Interview #189, 11/02)

"There is no one who stays there anymore [in his village]. It is not only our village that has had to flee; there are 16 villages to the east of the Day Loh [River] that have had to flee and stay in the jungle. The villages from the east of the Day Loh [River] who have fled to stay [in the jungle] are: K'Ter Kee, Saw Law Ko, Th'Kaw Soh, Pa Weh Daw Koh, Ler Ker Der Tha, Thay Yah Yuh, Kaw Mi Koh, Ler Ker Der Kah, Way Lah Kaw, Dee Dah Ko, K'Mu Doh, Kay Law Kee, Ma Pweh Ko, Ler Ker Der Ko, Ma Wa Kaw, and Pah Der Ka. Our civilians have had to flee and stay in the jungle. We have to face problems and some of us have died. We have no house; we have to stay in the jungle." - "Saw A'La Chit" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from K- village, Than Daung township (Interview #188, 11/02)

"Since 1997, the Burmese Army has arranged their military operations on the east side [of the Day Loh River] and have come to burn our villages. This is why we have had to flee and stay in the jungle. This causes big problems for us." - "Thra Dah Moo" (M, 45), internally displaced pastor from W— village, Than Daung township (Interview #153, 1/02)

SPDC columns periodically make sweeps through the areas where the internally displaced villagers are hiding. Whenever the columns find the hiding places of the villagers the soldiers often launch military-style assaults on the sites, shooting at any villagers who are still left in the sites when the soldiers arrive. After the soldiers have cleared the area, they loot or destroy anything which has been left behind. Shelters are burned down, clothes and blankets are stolen, pots are stabbed with bayonets to make them unusable, poultry and livestock are shot and any food is either eaten, taken or destroyed. Rice caches that are found in the forest are routinely looted, burned, or the rice is thrown on the ground. On January 27th 2004, soldiers from IB #94 came to a site where internally displaced villagers were hiding near Sho Ser village in Than Daung township. The villagers were able to flee, but the soldiers looted the items that they were forced to leave behind.

"They tried to look for us, but we were afraid of the sound of shooting and ran away. We had to sleep in the jungle for one or two days and then come back into the village. We did not see our belongings anymore. They ate all of our pigs and chickens. I was really upset that they were oppressing us like this. I went into my house to look at my basket. I still had my rice, but they mixed it with sand. I couldn't eat my rice anymore; there was a lot of sand." - "Naw Thet Wah" (F, 58), internally displaced villager from P—village, Than Daung township (Interview #164, 3/02)

"The SPDC Army came and ... destroyed our plantations, ate our food, and killed the people's buffaloes and ate them or left them to rot. They have destroyed everything." - "Saw Kyu Heh Law" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #152, 1/02)

If the SPDC cannot find the villagers themselves, they will target their food supplies in an effort to starve them out of the hills and down into the SPDC controlled areas. Crops that are still in the fields are trampled, burned or uprooted. Sometimes the crops are left intact, but landmines are placed in the fields [see 'Food Security']. The small plots where



An internally displaced villager points to where SPDC soldiers from IB #90 dumped his rice onto the ground and burned it when they swept through the area several weeks earlier. Some of the rice that survived the fire has since germinated. [KHRG]

displaced villagers grow cash crops are also destroyed. On numerous occasions, SPDC soldiers have cut down whole betelnut and coconut plantations just so that they may eat the soft pith inside the trunks. Betelnut trees are extremely slow growing, not becoming productive until after a decade of growth. Villagers often sell or barter the betelnut, cardamom or fruit to get rice or other foodstuffs for their families.

"They [SPDC] went into the hill fields and burned the Karen's paddy and rice. They destroyed all of the people's belongings when they saw them. They destroyed it all. If they saw something that they liked, they took it and sent it to Kler Lah [to their camp]." - "Saw Day Maw" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from D— village, Than Daung township (Interview #145, 11/00)

"They [SPDC] destroyed all of the cardamom, coffee, and betelnut plantations and all of the people's hill fields. They also destroyed the rice barns. They destroyed about ten or twenty rice barns. It was in 1998 or 1999. They saw the villagers' things, such as their clothes, food, and rice. They took it all." - "Saw Bway Htoo Lay" (M, 24), internally displaced villager from H— village, Than Daung township (Interview #150, 7/01)

"We cannot grow any more cardamom because the enemy [SPDC] burned it. We have to sleep like wild chickens, staying in one place one day, and in another place on another night." - "Saw Nu Pweh Koh" (M, 27), villager from M— village, Tantabin township (Interview #78, 4/01)

"We lost our bean and cardamom crops. They [SPDC] cut down the betelnut trees and ate the young part [pith] of the trees. The trees were [just] starting to get fruit. They [also] cut down the coconut trees and took the young part [pith] of the trees to eat. They destroyed a lot if you go and look at the betelnut trees and betelnut leaves in their [villagers] plantations. A lot of betelnut trees were destroyed. The people [SPDC] cut down a lot of the coconut trees also. All are lost." -"Saw Day Maw" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from D— village, Than Daung township (Interview #145, 11/00)

"When they come here, they destroy and burn everything. They take the villagers' belongings by force. When they go to the people's betelnut plantations, they peel off the bark and destroy the trees and eat them [the pith inside the tree]. We have to go and cut the grass around our betelnuts in fear. Instead of getting a lot, we can only get a little."-"Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from G—village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"We have to flee and stay in the jungle. If the SPDC sees us, they will destroy us, they will destroy our paddy and our rice, our plantations and all of our food. We have to take it [a supply of food] and keep it in the jungle." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from G— village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

Returning to their hiding sites after the soldiers have left, the displaced villagers often find that they have nothing left. They must start over with nothing but a machete and whatever clothes, pots and food they were able to take with them when they fled. Tarpaulins and plastic sheeting are rare, so most internally displaced villagers have to sleep out in the rain in the cold nights in the mountains until they can build new shelters. This has obvious detrimental effects on their health.

"There were only the house posts left. Now I have to wear other peoples' shirts. I don't even have my own shirts to wear." - "Saw Mu Wah" (M,?), internally displaced villager from S— village, Tantabin township (Interview #76, 10/00)

"It is because of the SPDC's oppression that we can't learn. We have to flee and stay in the jungle. It is very hard. Recently they came here. They burn all day and all night. All of our belongings were burned. We can't go and see our belongings, because if they see us they will kill us." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from G— village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"We always have to flee into the jungle, at least three or four times this year. We stay at the foot of the trees or the bamboo. We stay beside the river on the rocks. ... We have to flee quickly so we can't carry our belongings with us. We have to leave many things behind. We do not have time to carry them. If they [SPDC] come, they will eat it or destroy it. We have to flee and stay like this. We face many problems and we do not have enough food. In the rainy season, we have to stay under the trees and the bamboo. We don't have enough tarpaulins. We don't have enough food. Our children are sick. Some of the old people are not strong. We get diseases and we die. There are many problems for us." - "Saw Tay Kee" (M, 55), internally displaced villager from Pvillage, Tantabin township (Interview #83, 6/01)

Killings and Shootings

"I have suffered a lot over the last twenty years. There was no one [killed] in 2001, but in October 2000, they killed five people. They were from the guerrilla unit [Dam Byan Byaut Kya]. They are the same soldiers who came here recently. They stabbed them and beat them to death. They tortured them before they killed them. They even cut off one of their heads." - "Saw Thay Myo" (M, 48), villager from Y— village, Tantabin Township (Interview #80, 4/01)

The SPDC considers anyone who does not live under its control either in one of the relocation sites or in one of the *Nyein Chan Yay* villages to be its enemy. Internally displaced villagers are routinely shot dead by SPDC soldiers on sweeps through the hills. Villagers have been shot in their fields, on paths and at their hiding sites. The SPDC hopes that by shooting villagers, the other villagers will become so afraid that they will come down out of the mountains. The result, however, is the opposite with villagers fleeing farther into the mountains in an attempt to escape the SPDC Army. Villagers flee approaching SPDC columns when they come close because they know that they will be shot at on sight.

"If they see them, they [SPDC soldiers] just shoot at them. They don't have to ask any questions or interrogate them. They shoot whoever they see. Even the old people and the children, if they [SPDC] see them, they shoot them all." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

"If they see the villagers they will kill them, and if they can arrest the villagers they are going to kill them. In the past they have shot many villagers dead. In the past, when IB #39 came, they killed Naw aaaa's father, Naw Ta Ru, and Saw Taw Ni." - "Saw Per" (M,?), internally displaced villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #84, 6/01)

"They shot them on November 11th 2000 at 2:50 pm. I was in the jungle when I heard the gunshots. I didn't go at once; I waited for the SPDC to go back. When I arrived there, they were both dead. My brother was shot eight times and my cousin was shot six times." - "Saw Maw Thee" (M, 23), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township Interview #77, 12/00)

Villagers are rarely given a chance to plead with the soldiers, even if they wanted to come down out of the mountains. The soldiers usually open fire as soon as they see the villagers. Even when the soldiers call out to them, the villagers say it is at the same time as they shoot and the villagers are given no time to respond. Most villagers run as soon as they see the soldiers. Attacks on the hiding places of the

internally displaced villagers resemble military assaults. Many times SPDC troops open fire at ranges where it is easy to tell that the target is a villager and not a uniformed, armed KNLA soldier. Men, women, children and the elderly have all been shot and killed by SPDC soldiers. On June 8th 2001, nine year old Naw Pa Leh was gunned down by a platoon of soldiers from IB #75. The soldiers who at the time were based at Klaw Mi Der, entered a betelnut plantation in Tantabin township, and opened fire on the girl simply so that they could steal the betelnut leaves that she had collected from a betelnut plantation.

"She left the house and went to the betelnut plantation. When she was coming back, the enemy [SPDC] saw her. When they saw her, they shouted out to her and shot her dead straight away. They then took the betelnut leaves that she was carrying. They were from IB #75. Their commander is Commander Win Naung. It happened at nine o'clock on June 8th 2001 at xxxx [village]. Her name was Naw Pa Leh and she was my daughter. She was only nine years old, she studied in Kindergarten B." - "Saw Per" (M, ?), internally displaced villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #84, 6/01)

"Since January 2001, the SPDC have only entered the village once. When they came here they shot a little girl dead. She was only eight [sic: nine] years old. They came on the 9th or 10th [sic: 8th] of June [2001]. It was at the time when she went to climb up and get the betelnut leaves from the betelnut plantation. Her name was Naw Pa Leh. ... Those troops came from Klaw Mi Der. There were more than twenty of them. ... Later, the people went to bury their younger sister, but when they went they met with the Burmese [soldiers] so they had to flee. The villagers then had to go back and bury her the next day. She wasn't buried until three days after she died." -"Saw Pa Kay Lah" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from P— village, Tantabin township (Interview #85, 7/01)

"They [SPDC] shot a villager during February [2002]. I forget his name, but they shot him in the betelnut plantation at xxxx near yyyy and zzzz

[villages in Tantabin township]. They were Captain San Aung's troops, they were from Infantry Battalion #92. I don't know why. They [SPDC] walk and walk and if they want to shoot someone dead, they just shoot them dead, there is no reason. Also, on April 24th [2002], they shot one of the villagers from Kaw Thay Der. His name was Saw Ah Myat. They shot him dead below Kaw Thay Der on the way to the plains." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG field researcher (Interview #3, 8/02)

"They hurt me one time. They shot me in the hand with their gun. It was when I was coming back from my hill field where I was cutting grass. I was staying in my field hut. They [SPDC] went to stay in the village, and they shot me when I was coming back. They were the 'short pants' [Dam Byan Byaut Kya]. They came from xxxx. There were more than ten of them. [The commander's] name was Cheh Tee. It happened on November 14th, last year [2000]." - "Saw Tha Way" (M, 20), internally displaced villager from K—village, Than Daung township (Interview #166, 3/02)

On occasion the SPDC soldiers are able to capture internally displaced villagers. Sometimes the villagers are accused of helping the resistance, arrested and taken to an Army camp and later sent to a relocation site [see 'Arrest and Torture']. At other times the villagers are tortured and summarily executed by the SPDC troops. This happened on October 27th 2000, five displaced villagers, Saw Do Gay, Pah Maung Roh, Saw Pah Gaw, Saw Heh Doh Htoo, and Saw Kwa Poe were arrested and killed by soldiers from the Ba La Guerrilla Retaliation Unit as they were returning to their village after buying rice in the western plains. Two of them were killed with bayonets, while the other three were beaten to death with a stick. One of them was beheaded and all five bodies were buried in a mass grave along with the stick that they were beaten to death with. Villagers caught carrying rice in the forest are accused of supplying it to the KNU and can be executed for helping the resistance. In reality, the villagers are carrying the rice back to their families who are starving because the SPDC has destroyed their rice crop or they were unable to get a large enough harvest that year.

"On December 20 [2003], SPDC troops seized S-villager Saw Ka Paw, aged 50, and killed him. On December 20th [2003], at 16:00 hours [4 pm], the same troops seized and killed 22 year old M-villager Saw Kaw Lar Thoo." – (FR6, 12/03)

"I had nine children, but some of them have died. I don't know why [my son] was killed. I only know that he went to get some food. At that time we didn't have any rice, so he went to buy some rice and kerosene from the plains area. When he was

coming back with the food, he met the guerrilla group [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] on the way. It was Commander Tin Hla. They arrested him at xxxx [village] and the Burmese [soldiers] killed him at Peh Taw Day. He was 28 years old when he was killed. He was my second child."-"Naw Mu Kaw" (F, 54), internally displaced villager from Y— village, Tantabin township (Interview #89, 1/02)

"I have no husband; he died a long time ago. When he went to buy food from the plains area, the Burmese guerrilla group [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] saw him and arrested him. They killed him later with a bayonet on October 27th [2000]. I don't know why. They killed him and four of his friends at Peh Taw Day." - "Naw Mi Mu Wah" (F, 40), internally displaced villager from Y— village, Tantabin township (Interview #87, 1/02)

"We didn't have any food, so when he went to buy food from the plains area, the Burmese saw him on the way and arrested and [later] killed him. It was on October 27th 2000. He was killed in Peh Taw Day. I don't know why the Burmese [soldiers] killed him. The commander who killed my husband was Bo Tin Hla." - "Naw Thay Paw" (F, 45), internally displaced villager from Y— village, Tantabin township (Interview #88, 1/02)

"I don't have a hill field. I have small children so I don't have time to work in a hill field. I don't have a husband, he has already died. He died because the guerrilla group [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] killed him. At that time I didn't have any more rice, so I asked him to go and buy some. When he came back the Burmese guerrilla soldiers saw him carrying the rice and they killed him. They arrested him at xxxx [village], and took him to Peh Taw Day to kill him." - "Naw Lay Mo" (F, 33), internally displaced villager from Y— village, Tantabin township (Interview #90, 1/02)

"When my villagers went to the plain area to buy food, they met with the guerrilla troops [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] on the way back. It was on October 25th [2000]. They took those people to yyyy [village] and slept there for two nights. On the 27th they arrived at Peh Taw Day and they killed those people. Their names were Saw Do Gay, Pah Maung Roh, Saw Pah Gaw, Saw Heh Doh Htoo, and Saw Kwa Poe. They didn't shoot them; they beat them to death - every one of them. They killed Saw Heh Doh Htoo with a bayonet. They cut Saw Kwa Poe's throat and poked his belly with their bayonets four or five times. They buried them all in the same pit with the stick that they beat them to death with. It was Lieutenant [Colonel] Tin Hla who did that." -"Saw Bway Htoo" (M, 32), internally displaced former village head from Y- village, Tantabin township (Interview #91, 1/02)

Some of the SPDC Army battalions are particularly brutal in their methods of torture and killing. sometimes mutilating the bodies of their victims. On March 20th 2001, soldiers from IB #234 entered a village in Than Daung township and killed two of the villagers. Pi Day Pu was sitting in her field hut when the soldiers saw her. She was stabbed four times before having her throat slashed. On the same day, the same group of soldiers also killed Saw Htaw Thay. He was shot in the wrist, blowing off his hand, as well as in the ankle, before being fatally shot in the head. The soldiers then proceeded to cut off his nose, his ears, and his head. In 1999, soldiers from IB #26 killed two men after pursuing them into the jungle in Tantabin township. The soldiers then saw an old deaf woman, Naw Lay sitting in her field hut. The soldiers entered the hut and cut off her hands and legs before burning the hut with Naw Lay still alive inside it.

"They [SPDC] killed two people. They killed Pi Day Pu and Saw Htaw Thay. ... She [Pi Day Pu] was more than sixty years old. They stabbed her to death with a knife. She was in her cardamom plantation and they [SPDC] saw her in her hut. They didn't come to arrest her; they came and searched through her things. They took the things and killed the owner. They cut her throat. This happened on March 20th 2001. She was stabbed four times. She was stabbed in the right side, in her stomach, and in her back. They cut off his [Saw Htaw Thay's] ears, his tongue, his nose, and his head. He was also shot three times. He was shot in the left wrist and his wrist was blown off. He was shot in the right ankle, and he was also shot in the head. He was twenty years old. He was killed on the same day [as Pi Day Pu]. They shot him with a G3 [standard assault rifle of the SPDC Army]. They were from [IB] #234. There were over 120 soldiers; they were from Taw Oo, and they came directly to xxxx [village]." - "Saw Bway Htoo Lay" (M, 24), internally displaced villager from H- village, Than Daung township (Interview #150, 7/01)

"They [IB #26] saw two men, so they killed them. Then they saw one old person who was deaf. They went into the hut and cut of that person's hands and legs. After that, they burned the house with the woman still alive inside it. ... That happened in xxxx village. I don't know the names of the two men who were shot, but the old deaf woman's name was Naw Lay... It was two or three years ago." - "Naw Paw Eh (F, 18), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)



Internally displaced villagers returning to their village to collect what belongings they are able to carry away to their hiding place in the forest. [KHRG]

Arrest and Torture

"They built a fence around us so that it was like a cell. ... With all of the other villagers there were 24 of us. It was very crowded. We could not go outside the fence; we had to sleep there, eat and drink there, and shit and piss there. ... They locked us in the cell and wouldn't let us go outside. If we asked permission to go outside to pass stool or urine they shot at us. ... There was no shade so we had to stay in the sun all day. They would also force us to carry water for them and to cook rice for them on the riverside. ... Each day someone else got ill. When we arrived three people were already ill, but later more people got sick each day until there were about eight people sick. They [SPDC] would only give one tablet of medicine to each sick person." - "Saw Ba Htoo" (M, 40), villager from L—village, Than Daung township (Interview #148, 3/01)

The SPDC soldiers are occasionally able to capture villagers who they have either surprised and are unable to run away or have been wounded. Captured villagers are usually tied up and taken back to an Army camp or a relocation site. Wounded villagers are rarely given much medical treatment by the soldiers. If they are badly injured, they will usually be simply left by the soldiers to die. Often the villagers are forced to guide the soldiers or carry loads as porters first. The villagers are captured while the soldiers are on an operation so they often have to go for long periods of time. Some of the captured villagers are forced to walk in front of the soldiers as human minesweepers

"When we went to harvest our crops, they [SPDC] were waiting for us but we didn't know. They pointed their guns at us and arrested us. We could not go back to our village [hiding site]. They arrested us and forced us to carry their loads." - "Saw Eh Law Kaw Ko" (M, 53), internally displaced villager from D— village, Than Daung township (Interview #147, 3/01)

"The villagers that they [SPDC] arrest are forced to carry rations. They force them to cut their firewood and carry their water. The SPDC forces the villagers to carry very heavy loads even though they can't carry them. They force them to walk in front to clear the mines. If they cannot carry and fall down, they will hit them, punch them and kick them. Sometimes they shoot them dead. They keep the villagers for a month and use them to carry [their supplies]. They don't release them, because they use them to carry like cattle. They use them however they want to use them. The villagers are afraid of the power of the guns, so they are used like cattle. When they [SPDC] are active here, they use the villagers to carry their rations for them. The villagers must look for opportunities and escape." - "Naw Ta Ta" (F, 26), internally displaced villager from D—village, Than Daung township (Interview #189, 11/02)

"They took me to Mawchi [in Karenni State] for one week. They arrested two of us, they also arrested my son. They arrested us in my plantation. They didn't feed us enough. They didn't give us any water, and they only gave us rice once a day without any salt. They tied my hands in front of me, but they forced him [his son] to carry [a load]. He had to carry about five or six viss [8–10 kgs. / 18–22 lbs.]. They hit me and forced me to walk in front of them." - "Saw Ti Ki Daw" (M, 55), internally displaced villager from B— village, Than Daung township (Interview #154, 1/02)

Villagers who are captured by the soldiers are usually beaten before being tied up. This is often done with a large stick or length of bamboo, or with the soldiers' rifle butts. Adults as well as children have been beaten by the soldiers. Some villagers who the soldiers suspect of being KNU or KNLA are tortured and then summarily executed by the soldiers. Evidence is never presented to prove the accusation and the villager is never taken for a trial. They are executed in the forest and simply left to rot [see 'Killings and Shootings'].

"They [SPDC] met me one time when I was coming back from the Sheh Loh River and they hit me three times with a piece of bamboo." - "Saw Sa Min" (M, 35), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #169, 3/02)

"Last year I saw them [SPDC] pound one of the children's heads with the butt of their gun." - "Saw Doh Dee" (M, 40), internally displaced villager from M— village, Than Daung township (Interview #170, 3/02)

When villagers are captured they are not usually handed over to the other villagers in the relocation sites or villages and allowed to live there. They are first held as prisoners in the Army camps under deplorable conditions. Many villagers say they were held in crowded pits in the ground. Often the person

held in the pit is not let out to relieve themselves: instead they must relieve themselves in the pit. The pits are out in the open with no covers, exposing the villagers to the sun or rain. When they are allowed out, it is to do labour for the soldiers such as carrying water or cooking rice. Many villagers become sick from the conditions in the pits. On February 27th 2001, six villagers from L- village in Than Daung township were arrested by soldiers from IB #34 and forced to carry loads of rations and munitions weighing as much as 18 viss (30 kgs. / 65 lbs.). They were then detained at Keh Koh Army camp in an enclosed pit along with 18 other villagers until March 10th. By the time they were released, eight of the captives had fallen ill. Three of the villagers were already sick when they were put in the pit and their conditions deteriorated over the period of detention owing to the unsanitary conditions and the fact that the soldiers neglected to provide adequate medical treatment. When the villagers asked to be let out so that they could go to the toilet, the soldiers would fire their rifles to frighten the villagers out of asking a second time. On April 15th 2002, a group of approximately fifteen villagers were also arrested by soldiers from IB #34 and detained in the same enclosure at Keh Koh Army camp in Than Daung township. This group was held within the enclosure for over three months before being released.

"On February 28th 2001 they [SPDC] came to the place where we live and took 23 villagers. Then on March 1st [2001], they sent us to the top of Keh Koh Mountain [to the Army camp located there] and put us inside their fence [an enclosure]. They didn't feed us enough. We had to sleep there, eat there, and urinate there."-"Saw Eh Law Kaw Ko" (M, 53), internally displaced villager from D— village, Than Daung township (Interview #147, 3/02)

"When we arrived [at the camp] they tied us up and kept us in a pit and built a fence around us. ... We had to stay there for two weeks. We slept there and we had to shit and urinate there." - "Saw Gri Wah" (M, 59), internally displaced villager from D— village, Than Daung township (Interview #149, 3/01)

"They came here on April 15th [2002]. When they came to the village [hiding site] they arrested over fifteen villagers. They took us to the upper place [Keh Koh Army camp] and put us together inside the fence [enclosure]. They fed us, but it was not enough. Sometimes we could drink, but sometimes we couldn't drink, because the place was far away from the water. We had to stay there for over three months. They told us to dig a hole for the toilet in the place where we had to sleep. We had to pass urine and shit there. We had to sleep there, eat there, pass urine, and shit there."

- "Saw Khaw Myo" (M, 53), internally displaced villager from D— village, Than Daung township (Interview #190, 11/02)

Similar makeshift holding centres reportedly exist at the Bawgali Gyi Army camp at Kler Lah. One villager described being imprisoned in an enclosed hole measuring 4.5 metres (15 feet) deep with sides 3.6 metres (12 feet) long. He was arrested by troops from IB #39 for being suspected of supplying money to the KNU, while visiting his mother-in-law in a neighbouring village. During his incarceration, he was subjected to various forms of torture by the SPDC. The soldiers locked his legs in a set of medieval-style stocks and rolled a mortar barrel back and forth along his shins. This bruises the bone, causing the skin on the shins to scuff off, as well as causing a great deal of pain. After being kept in the hole for two months, he was then forced to serve as a porter for three weeks to Zayatkyi.

"I went to visit my mother-in-law and they arrested me. They put my legs in the stocks and rolled a mortar tube on my legs. They punched me and hit me. They hit me hard. They put me into a hole. The hole was ten cubits [4.5 metres / 15 feet] deep and eight cubits along the walls [3.6 metres / 12 feet]. They closed it over. I could still breathe. They kept me there for two months. I also had to suffer when I went to porter for Major Aung Kaing and Captain Thaing Win from Infantry Battalion #39 to Zayatkyi. One of my legs was not good and I couldn't keep up, but they forced me to follow them. It took me three weeks to get to Zayatkyi." - "Saw Htay Moo" (M, 52), internally displaced former village head from M— village, Than Daung township (Interview #168, 3/02)

Health and Education

"The SPDC came to our place and it caused problems for us. We have had to flee to live in the jungle. We also have problems with our school. Some of the children are sick and can't learn. We can't feed the children enough and we don't have enough materials. There are many things that we need for the school. This year I have only been able to teach for three months." - "Thramu Plo Maw" (F, 32), internally displaced teacher from T— village, Than Daung township (Interview #155, 1/02)

Villagers living on the run in the hills of Toungoo District have very little access to medicines and even less access to people trained in how to administer the medicine. Most internally displaced villagers do not dare to go to the Nyein Chan Yay villages to buy medicine. They are afraid of being recognised as not from the village or of being caught by SPDC troops along the way. Either way they would be accused of aiding the KNU by buying and carrying the medicine. This would surely result in their being beaten and possibly executed. Most of the medicines available in the bigger villages are low quality Burmese over the counter drugs. Injections and other high quality medicines are very expensive and difficult to obtain. Some villagers do manage to carry medicine back to their hiding sites, but it is often in small amounts to avoid detection and not enough. Without access to medicine, the villagers rely on traditional medicines made from tree bark, roots or leaves which can be foraged in the forest. Many of these traditional remedies are inadequate or simply do not work. Many villagers have died from diseases that are easily treatable because they could not get the proper medicines. Gunshot and landmine wounds are particularly bad because there are almost no medicines or medical training to treat them. Wounded villagers have to be carried to a mobile medical team or a mobile clinic. Many villagers die from their wounds before they can reach help.

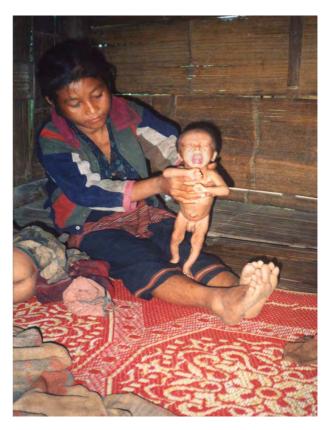
Q: "Has there been anyone who has died from diarrhoea, stomach pains, or vomiting?"

A: "Yes, because they didn't have the medicine to treat it. Some of them got the medicine and they were healed, but some of them didn't get any medicine and died. Some of them didn't have the money [to buy medicine] and died." - "Saw Po Thu" (M, 37), internally displaced villager from K—village, Tantabin township (Interview #86, 7/01)

"If we get sick when we flee into the jungle, we don't have any medicine. We just go and get the tree bark and drink it with fishpaste like that. There is no clinic close to us. The only one is in Kler Lah, but we dare not to go. We want to go, but we dare not to. We are afraid that the SPDC will see us." - "Saw Law Ko" (M, 57), internally displaced former village head from N—village, Than Daung township (Interview #162, 3/02)

"We fled to stay in the jungle and some of the villagers have became sick. It is very difficult to find medicine. We have to send one of the women secretly. They can only carry a little bit back. If they carried too much, they would be killed. Some people die because they do not get enough medicine. For those people who are close to the medicine, they can buy one or two injections so they can be healed." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from G— village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"One of my sons died at Yaw Loh. He died in the jungle. I was alone – just my children and I. There were a lot of diseases. It is a big problem." - "Naw Wee Wee" (F, 51), villager from H— village, Tantabin township (Interview #79, 4/01)



A two month old baby in Than Daung township showing symptoms of underdevelopment and malnutrition. The family has no money to purchase medicine to treat him or his mother who fell ill shortly after his birth. [KHRG]

"I have to face a lot of problems. In the rainy season my children and my friends were sick. We have to go over here and over there to find food. Some people have died. There are a lot of problems." - "Saw Ku Lay Thaw" (M, 42), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #176, 3/02)



Internally displaced children attending classes at their school deep in the forest of Tantabin township. [KHRG]

The conditions in which the internally displaced villagers are forced to live make them very susceptible to illnesses. Many of the villagers do not have much more than the clothes on their backs. Many have only a couple of blankets to keep them warm. The villagers have to sleep without adequate shelter from the cold and rain before they can build shelters. The majority of the hills in Toungoo District have an elevation in excess of 900 metres / 3,000 feet, the highest of which has a maximum altitude of approximately 2,600 metres / 8,600 feet. The cool mountain air brings ill health to those who do not have enough blankets or warm clothing to combat the cold season from December to February. Those who flee without mosquito nets must contend with the increased risk of contracting potentially lifethreatening diseases such as malaria and dengue fever, which are both endemic to the area. Malaria is by far the most prevalent disease contracted by internally displaced villagers in Toungoo District. Interviewees have often spoken of villagers displaying the common symptoms of malaria: being stricken with fever and distended spleens.

"There are a lot of problems. Right now it is winter and we do not have enough clothes, blankets, or mosquito nets. The insects [mosquitoes] bite us and we get sick." - "Thra Dah Moo" (M, 45), internally displaced pastor from W— village, Than Daung township (Interview #153, 1/02)

"We don't have our house anymore, so we have to flee and stay in the jungle. It causes us a lot of problems. We need peace. We have to live with illnesses because we don't have a house. We can't sleep well. We have to move our place very often and we can't build a hut. We have to stay on the ground. There are a lot of people

who are sick and who die. There are no medicines for us."- "Saw Kyu Heh Law" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from K—village, Than Daung township (Interview #152, 1/02)

Internally displaced villagers rarely get enough food to eat. They cannot grow enough rice in their fields and foraging for food in the forest often turns up only a few edible roots and leaves. Meat is very rare since most villagers have had to leave their poultry and livestock behind. Most villagers end up eating a type of watery rice porridge in order to stretch the rice supply until the next harvest [see

'Food Security']. Malnutrition, especially among children, is common. The two forms of malnutrition, Kwashiorkor and Marasmus both exist in Toungoo District. Complications which almost invariably develop in those suffering from either form of the disease are pneumonia, diarrhoea, urinary tract infections, and sepsis; either separately or in combination. All of these symptoms have been observed in patients living in Toungoo District. The problem is further aggravated by the lack of essential vitamins and minerals in their diets. According to a number of different Karen healthcare workers, other diseases such as beriberi and dysentery are also extremely common among internally displaced villagers. Scores of displaced villagers have succumbed to easily treatable diseases.

"The biggest problem is that of food. They [IDPs] don't get enough food, so there are many kinds of diseases that they get. The food that they eat doesn't have [enough] protein. This is why there are more and more [cases of] diseases." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

Very little outside assistance is able to reach the internally displaced villagers in Toungoo District. The district's geographic isolation makes the delivery of medical supplies both difficult and infrequent. The KNU and other organisations provide what medicines they can to the villagers, but this is usually only

enough to last for about three months. A number of Karen organisations have 'backpack medical teams' that operate in the district. These teams are made up of trained medics who travel to as many internally displaced villager hiding sites as they can, treating the villagers with whatever medicines they can carry in their backpacks. A few mobile clinics also exist where villagers can go to seek treatment. The clinics only have a limited supply of medicines. Much of the medicine has to be rationed and sometimes villagers have to be turned away in order to help the more seriously ill. The medics and the clinics often do not have the medicines to deal with serious injuries such as serious gunshot wounds and landmine injuries. The medics do what they can, but many of the patients succumb to their wounds. Many others die before they can be reached by a backpack team or can be brought to a clinic. Taking the wounded villager to a hospital in Thailand is not an option due to the long distances involved. Neither is taking the villagers to a Burmese hospital. Villagers with gunshot or landmine injuries are often treated by the hospitals as though they must have received them because they are members of the resistance. Backpack medics have been shot by SPDC patrols and the mobile clinics are burned down if the SPDC finds them.

"The [KNU] health department can only open one clinic. They have to limit their time to three months. There is no medicine anymore. The other way they [villagers] can get help is from the backpack [medics]. They go into the area for six months at a time. There were five backpack medic [teams] who went to look after the patients. One of their backpacks contains the same amount of medicine as one clinic. They go around and help the IDPs who are sick, but it is not enough. They can only go for six months. If there are any sick people after those six months, they cannot get any medicine." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG field researcher (Interview #3, 8/02)

"One backpack team must take care of 2,000 patients. We now have five backpack teams, so we can take care of five different areas, two in Tantabin township and three in Than Daung township. The backpack teams go in every six months and supply them with medicine so that the [healthcare] workers who work there can take care of the villagers. Sometimes if they don't have any more medicine they use herbal medicine and try to buy medicine from the town."

- Saw Thaw Kee" (M, 30), Karen relief worker (Interview #196, 8/03)

Karen villagers hold education in very high regard. Internally displaced villagers try to give their children some sort of an education even while hiding in the forest. Teachers and books are hard to come by, but the villagers often try to find someone with some schooling who can teach their children. When not being chased by the SPDC Army, villagers send their children to learn from a better educated villager (who usually has had only three or four years of schooling). These classes are often held in one of the shelters or with the children sitting on the ground. There may be an improvised chalkboard of split bamboo and a piece of charcoal for chalk. Some of the larger IDP sites may have a temporary shelter that serves as a school and a couple of teachers. These schools rarely go beyond the fourth year. Whenever SPDC columns come close, the schools must close and the students flee to hide with their parents until the troops leave the area. The makeshift schools are usually burned to the ground by the soldiers when they find them. Sometimes the soldiers do not leave and the school must be moved to a new place where it is set up again. This severely disrupts the education of the students; some only get three months of school in a year. The school year is also disrupted by the necessity of the parents taking the children out of school to help them with their fields.

A 19 year old internally displaced teacher conducting a lesson in her hiding village in Than Daung township. [KHRG]



"Our children can't learn and we have to stay in the dark. This also causes us problems. We want peace in our country in the future, so our country can improve. This is what we hope for our lives in the future." - "Thra Dah Moo" (M, 45), internally displaced pastor from W— village, Than Daung township (Interview #153, 1/02)

"We have not had a school since the Burmese [soldiers] built the [Kaw Thay Der to Bu Sah Kee] car road [in 1995]." - "Saw Meh Lah" (M, 27), villager from M— village, Tantabin township (Interview #82, 4/01)

"We have a school in the village. The villagers built the school, but we cannot teach Karen because we don't have any [Karen] text books and we cannot order the text books anywhere.""Saw Pee Bee" (M, 35), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #191, 11/02)

"There is no school in our village. We don't have a school in our village because the SPDC is oppressing us. The children can't learn. They can't even write their names. When we ask them to read, they say that they can't read. It is because the SPDC oppresses us, so the children can't learn. Some of them [villagers] send their children to Kler Lah, and some of them can't [afford to] send their children."- "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from G—village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"Some of them want to go to school, but there is no school. Some of the children go to learn in other places. Some of their parents can't [afford to] send them to school anymore. They don't have enough food so they can't [afford to] send their children to school. This is why the children can't learn." - "Saw Po Thu" (M, 37), internally displaced villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #86, 7/01)

"There is no school. We haven't had a school for a long time; because of the SPDC, we do not dare to have a school. The children can't learn and they have to stay like that [in hiding]. There are about twenty children, but right now they can't learn. Some of them are grown and they do not dare to learn anymore." - "Saw Po Thu" (M, 37), internally displaced villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #86, 7/01)

"There are a lot of children everywhere. They have to flee and stay like that [hide] so they cannot learn. There is no choice and no time for them to learn. They have to stay like that; like crazy dumb people. ... They don't have any education anymore. The children can't learn anymore. They have to read and write, but they can't read and write anymore. If the people can't read and write there are going to be more and more problems in the future." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

V. Landmines

"We had to go on the 11th [of March, 2002]. There were over 300 villagers who had to go. Villagers have to go from every village. The quota for xxxx village was 30 sacks of rice, so they demanded thirty people. They [SPDC] walked behind the villagers. Some of them [porters] were injured and some of them were killed. Some of them stepped on mines. Some of them were dead when they arrived back to their village, but some of them didn't die [they were wounded, but not fatally]." - "Saw Hser Moo" (M, 29), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #51, 3/02)

Both the SPDC and the KNLA lay landmines in Toungoo District, but it is often the villagers who are the victims. Many villagers have been maimed or killed after stepping on them in their fields or on paths. SPDC military units have placed landmines in villagers' fields and beside houses in villages after they have ordered them to be relocated. This is becoming more common as a way of denying the villagers the ability to go back to their village without having to burn it down which creates evidence. SPDC soldiers have also placed them in the fields of displaced villagers and on the trails in the forest that they know internally displaced villagers use to carry rice back to their hiding places. Landmines placed by the SPDC alongside roads, presumably to keep the KNLA from landmining the roads, have killed several villagers who were ordered to clear the brush from beside the road [see 'Road Projects'].

"Last summer [2002] they planted landmines [near the village] and one of the young women who was only 28 years old was wounded. She died after stepping on a Burmese landmine. That young woman's name was Naw L—; she was from xxxx village. Recently on March 6th [2002], one of our villagers, Saw aaaa, who came to live in our village when the situation became unstable, was injured by a landmine and one of his legs was blown off when he was going back to yyyy [village]." - "Saw Bo Kee" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #75, 7/02)

"They [Dam Byan Byaut Kya] place landmines on the path that the civilians and villagers use to go to their hill fields.... They still place landmines at the lower side of Tantabin township, [especially] the west side.... They have come up and placed landmines in places like Ko Lu, Pway Baw Der and Saw Mu Der." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

"They [SPDC] laid landmines. Recently, on March 22nd 2002, my uncle, my father, and I went to Kler Lah. At that time, my father, and one of my friends hit landmines and died. My other friends and I



This 37 year old villager from Tantabin township stepped on a landmine planted by IB #53 while

ran away. We were afraid, so we ran away." - "Saw Eh T'Thee" (M, 12), villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #172, 3/02)

Landmines are manufactured by the SPDC in factories located in central Burma. The SPDC Army uses landmines as perimeter defences at their camps, in ambushes against the KNLA, as well as to directly target the villagers. The SPDC currently produces two main landmines: the MM-1 stake fragmentation mine and the MM-2 blast mine. The MM-1 is a copy of the Chinese-made PMOZ-2 stake fragmentation or 'corncob' mine, and the MM-2 is a copy of the Chinese-made PMN blast mine [photos of both these mines can be seen in KHRG Photo Set 2002-A (December 2002) available online at

www.khrg.org]. The MM-1 is roughly the size and shape of a soft drink can and can be buried or rigged to a tripwire. The MM-2 mine is buried so that the flat top surface is at ground level. The MM-1 is the more powerful of the two. One Karen relief worker familiar with the human rights situation in Toungoo District told KHRG that each SPDC battalion is given 50 antipersonnel blast landmines as well as 30 directional fragmentation claymore-type mines. He did not elaborate, but one would assume that once these mines have been deployed, a fresh supply would be issued to the battalion.

"Each [SPDC Army] battalion has 50 landmines and 30 claymore mines. They use them for revenge because they stepped on the KNU landmines. The SPDC plant their landmines everywhere. [They plant them] under the trees, on the roads, and at the places where the villagers will take a rest." - "Saw Play Kaw" (M, 31), Karen relief worker (Interview #197, 8/03)

The KNLA often removes the landmines if any of their units are in the vicinity, but the villagers do sometimes try to remove them themselves. Neither the villagers nor the KNLA have mine detection equipment or body shields, so landmine removal is very dangerous. Often the landmines are removed by probing for them with a knife and digging them out by hand. Numerous KNLA soldiers and villagers have been killed or maimed trying to remove mines. The KNLA has also become a heavy user of landmines in Toungoo District where bullets are difficult to get and are therefore precious. American and Chinese landmines have become more difficult to obtain on

the black market in recent years, so the KNLA now manufactures most of its own mines. Most are made out of simple materials like PVC piping, bamboo, wood, scrap metal and shotgun pellets. Short of ammunition and heavily outnumbered by the SPDC, the KNLA has become increasingly reliant on landmines to hinder the movements of SPDC troops as well as to keep its own supply lines open. The KNLA also uses its landmines to ambush SPDC troops and to defend some of the larger IDP sites. No maps are kept by either side, although the KNLA does try to tell villagers which paths are mined. Their efforts are, however, never enough and although most villagers are killed or maimed by SPDC mines, some villagers are still killed or maimed by KNLA mines.

"The people who went to bury them were their aunt and uncle and their other relatives. At that time, two or three [KNLA] soldiers went with them. The soldiers who went with them went to clear [the area of landmines]. Before they could bury the soldier, they had to clear the area first. Sometimes after they shoot people dead, they [SPDC] place landmines beside the dead body. ... If they are villagers, they only lay landmines sometimes, but if they were soldiers, they always plant landmines. So that when the people go to see the body they will step on the mine." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

Certain areas of Toungoo District suffer heavily from landmine contamination. Areas within Toungoo District that contain many landmines are: the region

Stamp:

#x Strategic Operations Command Group
Ta Pa Ka [Southern Command Headquarters]

Mobile #x Strategic Operations Command Group Bawgali Gyi Letter No: xxxx / x / Oo x Date: Year 2002, March 17th

To:

Chairperson xxxx village

Subject: Specifying the prohibited area

When [the villagers from] the villages of xxxx, yyyy, zzzz, wwww go to uuuu village, the car road must be used and the insurgents should not enter uuuu by the path the people travel, it will be closed with landmines starting on March 18th 2002 at 6 o'clock in the evening, you are informed.

[Sd.]

(for) Temporary Strategic Operations Commander

Order # 14: This is a translation of an order sent to several villages in Tantabin Township prohibiting the use of a certain path which was closed with landmines [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #14 in Appendix D.]

stretching from Bu Sah Kee to Saw Mu Der, the areas surrounding Kaw Thay Der and Naw Soe in Tantabin township, and the wedge of land to the north of Kler Lah bordered by the Day Loh and Klay Loh Rivers in Than Daung township. The banks of the Yaw Loh River, the Klay Loh River, and the Day Loh River are also peppered with mines, as are the car roads and the areas adjacent to the car roads [see Map 3]. By

planting many mines along the car roads and rivers, the SPDC creates boundaries that the villagers and internally displaced villagers alike do not dare to cross, effectively restricting them to certain areas. However, not all landmine injuries on the car roads can be attributed to SPDC landmines. The KNLA also lays mines on the roads to hinder SPDC efforts to resupply their camps.

The SPDC has been planting landmines on the paths that *Nyein Chan Yay* villagers and internally displaced villagers use when going to buy food from the markets, to collect water, or to go to their plantations. Often, a number of mines are planted in the same area, so when one

person is wounded or killed after stepping on one of the mines, those who come to their aid will also be injured or killed when they step on one of the other mines. Many mines have also been planted in the fields and plantations of both Nyein Chan Yay and displaced villagers. For this reason many fields and plantations are left unharvested. Failure to harvest their crops leaves a lot of villagers without the food or the cash that they would have made from selling the harvest in the local markets. This makes it difficult for the villagers to buy enough rice to feed their families and to pay the endless array of fees imposed upon them. In March 2002, the Strategic Operations Command in Kler Lah issued an order to villagers in the area prohibiting the villagers from using the paths to a specific village in Tantabin township. The order clearly says that landmines would be placed on the paths [see Order #14]. The SPDC's stated intention is to keep 'insurgents' from entering the village, but it will also force villagers to enter through checkpoints where they will be forced to pay bribes. It also the added effect of blocking internally displaced villagers hiding in the surrounding hills from coming down to buy rice. Orders like these are rare as armies on all sides often do not tell the villagers where they have laid their landmines.

"We have heard that they plant landmines and that other villagers have struck these landmines. Some of the people have died and some of them have had their legs or arms blown off when they were walking on the path to go and buy and sell their food. We are afraid of them [landmines]. The SPDC plants their landmines on the path so it is not easy for us to work." - "Naw Der Ler" (F, 45), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #128, 4/02)



Three Burmese-made MM-2 antipersonnel blast mines that were removed by KNLA soldiers in Than Daung township. Mines of this sort are common across Toungoo District. [KHRG]

"IB #75 and IB #59 plant landmines wherever they go. They plant their landmines on the paths that the villagers use to buy rice and at the places where the villagers will take a rest. They plant two or three landmines in each place. If someone steps on one, when their friends come to help them they are also hurt. Two or three people die each time with these landmines. The SPDC has planted many landmines in the Der Doh area and on the paths. In Kaw Thay Der they have planted most of their landmines in the cardamom plantations and in the betelnut plantations. They have also planted many in the Bu Sah Kee area. They plant them to target the villagers." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

"Since the SPDC have laid landmines like this, we [villagers] worry about how we are going to stay alive this year. It is near the time when we need to cut the trees [harvest the crops], but we do not dare to cut the trees or go outside [of the village]. How will we sell our betelnut, cardamom, and coffee if we do not dare to take it [to sell in the market]? We are very scared because of the landmines." - "Saw Ba Htee" (M, 40) villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #97, 11/00)

By far the greatest number of landmine injuries occur among the Nyein Chan Yav villagers when they are forced to porter for the Army. Many of the areas where the villagers are forced to porter loads for the SPDC Army are strewn with landmines. Villagers have repeatedly told KHRG that SPDC soldiers force the villagers to walk in front of the soldiers in order to act as human minesweepers. This is especially common on the Kler Lah-Bu Sah Kee road where many villagers have been wounded or killed since the SPDC started building the road in 1995. The KNLA has planted many landmines along the roads and paths to ambush SPDC columns or vehicles. The landmines then lie in wait and remain a threat to civilians for the six to nine months that it takes for the batteries inside them to die. Once the batteries expire, the homemade landmines are rendered ineffective without a power source to ignite the detonator. Considering the number of landmines laid in the district and the frequency which the villagers are forced to porter loads for the SPDC along the heavily landmine-contaminated trails, it is only a matter of time before a villager's luck runs out and he or she steps on a landmine. In order to minimise the chances of this happening, many villagers speak of walking on rocks, along the edges of cliffs, in rivers and tributaries, or in the footprints of those who have gone before them whenever the opportunity presents itself.

"We are suffering in our village. Ever since the Burmese troops came here, we have had to go and carry loads to Bu Sah Kee. Sometimes when the villagers have to go and carry the loads, some of them die on the way. Many people have been hurt by landmines; there have been a lot. They forced us to go in front. It makes us unhappy to talk about this. Even on Sunday – we want to worship but they do not allow us. They force us to go, so we must. When we think about it, it is very painful for our hearts, but we can't do anything about it." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 22), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

"I have never seen peace. All of the villagers are faced with trouble and it is very difficult for them to stay alive. When IB #30 entered [the village], the women had to go and porter for them. When the women would porter, the enemies [SPDC] would torture them. They would die on the way by [stepping on] the landmines and this would hurt my heart a lot. At that time [when IB #30 came], three girls were killed." - "Saw Ba Htee" (M, 40) villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #97, 11/00)

Q: "Has there been anyone who has been injured by a landmine and had their legs or arms blown off when they have gone to porter?"

A: "Yes, there have been ten men. Their names were Saw Ler Say, aaaa, Saw Oh Moo, Elder Kya

Aye, bbbb, Saw Kler Paw, cccc, dddd, eeee, and ffff.... Four of them [were killed]. They were Saw Ler Say, Saw Oh Moo, Saw Kler Paw, and Elder Kya Aye. They died straight away. Their friends had to bury them." - "Naw Hser Lay" (F, 50), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #15, 7/01)

"One or two people hit a landmine every year. People always have to go for loh ah pay and sometimes they hit the landmines." - "Saw Hser Moo" (M, 29), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #51, 3/02)

"Many people have been injured. They have been hurt by the landmines. There have been four or five people hurt by the landmines. They were all men. The women also have to go to work [portering], but none of them have been injured. ... One of the villagers who was hurt by the landmines was Saw Aye Pray, he died at the Klay Loh River. Another one was Saw Ta Blu, he was also hurt by a landmine at the Klay Loh River. Another one was Saw Hsa Mee, he was hurt by a landmine below Maw Ni Dtine Gyi [Naw Soe] Army camp. Ta Htoo Pa was also hurt by a landmine at Maw Ni Dtine Gyi [Naw Soe] Army camp, and Win Maung was also hurt by a landmine at Naw Soe. They all had to go and carry loads for the enemy [SPDC]." - "Saw Koh Gyi" (M, 45), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #53, 4/02)

"Since I have been the village head, they have called me many times over many months. They send me to the dangerous places at Kaw Thay Der and Der Doh. I have to walk on the rocks and beside the cliff. It is a place where I am afraid to walk, but I have to go. If I do not go, they will torture me." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), forcibly relocated village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"When we arrived on the other side of the Yaw Loh [River], they told us, 'You have to step in each other's footprints.' We only went half way and then came back. We did not dare to go any farther."- "Naw Thet Wah" (F, 58), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"When they forced the people to carry the loads, they [SPDC] would not walk in front. They forced the people to go in front and they followed them. When the villagers had to go like that, they would get wounded. Four people have died. ... Another eight have been injured. All of those eight people had their legs blown off so they cannot work [to get food] to eat." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 18), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

People do not dare to go to that place, that place is dangerous ...

"They [SPDC] planted landmines beside the road so that the people [villagers] couldn't travel anywhere. Our people didn't dare to go there. After they planted the landmines, they posted a sign in front of Kler Lah village which said that they had planted landmines. When they laid the landmines they also gave an order [document], so that they did it legally. There have been many people who have hit the landmines. One of the Kaw Thay Der villagers hit a landmine and had his leg blown off. He did not die, we had to treat him. Now he can walk. Another Kaw Thay Der villager, named Naw L— hit a landmine on April 2nd [2002] at 11:45, but later died at 2:00 o'clock. Her friend also got a big injury, so she was sent to town [to be treated]. One of the villagers from xxxx [village] was arrested by Deputy Battalion Commander Min Thaw from IB #264 and ordered to walk in front [of the soldiers]. They [SPDC] knew that there were landmines so they forced him to walk in front. He stepped on a landmine and his leg was blown off. Captain Thet Oo of Strategic Operations Command #3 ordered his men to lay landmines on the Klay Wa path beside the Klay Loh River near yyyy [village]. This is the path that they [villagers from yyyy] use when they go to buy food from Kler Lah. On March 21st [2002] at 6:00 o'clock in the morning, two villagers from yyyy stepped on a landmine and died immediately. One of their friends was also injured. In the afternoon at 1:00 o'clock another villager was injured. He had his leg blown off. He stepped on a landmine at the same place. On April 26th [2002] at midnight, Saw Ki Ki Htoo, a villager from zzzz [village] was killed when he stepped on a landmine. He went to catch some fish. This is the same path that the villagers use when they go to Kler Lah to buy food. Two other people from wwww [village] hit a landmine. One of them died straight away and the other one's eyes were injured, he is now blind. We heard that they laid twenty landmines on the path from Klay Wa to Kler Lah, but we do not know how many they planted beside Kaw Thay Der. People do not dare to go to that place, that place is dangerous. Before, the people were not sure if they [SPDC] had laid landmines or not, but now people are stepping on the mines and dying. Before, the Burmese [Army] threatened, but now they do not threaten anymore, they are really doing it. There have been many people who have stepped on landmines and died. Most of the people [who step on the mines] die. The SPDC mines are very powerful. When the people step on them, most of them die." - "Saw Htoo Say" (M, 38), KHRG field researcher (Interview #3, 8/02)

"The enemy forced them to be porters and then they were hurt by the landmines. They all died straight away. They [SPDC] would walk behind them [the porters]. Sometimes when they forced them [the porters] to walk in front, they were injured by the landmines and were killed." - "Saw Koh Gyi" (M, 45), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #53, 4/02)

"They do not clear the road [of landmines] for the porters. If they [SPDC] do not dare to go in front and are afraid of the landmines, they force us to go in front. We do not dare to, but we have to go [in front]. We have to stomp on the landmines for them. Fifteen people have been injured. Three of them have died. One of them was a woman. We buried her on the side of the road. We had to bury her ourselves. The Burmese [SPDC] didn't come and help us. We didn't take any machetes or mattocks, so we had to bury her with a knife. It [her body] didn't cover well. We didn't take anything [to dig with] with us. We wrapped her in a tarpaulin. That happened over four years ago." - "Naw Lah Mu" (F, 20), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #31, 7/01)

"They knew [that there were landmines in the area], that is why they did not dare to go. They told the people to go first and that they would come later. They would force us to go in front whenever they did not dare to go themselves.""Naw Paw Htoo Mu" (F, 25), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #12, 11/00)

Whenever a villager or a villager porter is wounded, the SPDC simply claims that it is the KNU, not the SPDC who is liable. This justification is used by SPDC officers to avoid having to pay compensation for landmine victims. On occasion SPDC units have paid for villagers, usually wounded porters, to go to a hospital, but this is rare. More often it is the villagers themselves who must transport the injured villager and pay for any medical treatment. The SPDC also does not usually pay compensation for villagers who have died from landmines. When a villager is killed or wounded by a landmine it becomes much more difficult for the family to find food.

"My husband hit the landmine on the 23rd of April, 1999. After he hit the landmine he went straight home. He died after he arrived home. I remain alone and my father has to look after me. My father has only one leg. One of his legs was



This 14 year old boy was one of two victims killed outright after stepping on SPDC landmines on March 22nd 2002 as they were walking to a nearby village to buy food. *[KHRG]*

blown off [when he also stepped on a landmine] so he has many problems." - "Naw Blu Paw" (F, 25), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #122, 3/02)

"My son was wounded badly [by the landmine]. He was wounded on his buttocks and has many other wounds. There were eighteen pieces [of shrapnel] inside him. It happened on January 7th 2002." - "Naw Si Si Paw" (F, 65), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #99, 1/02)

"When we would go and carry and if one of us got an injury, they would say, 'Your relatives [KNLA] came here and laid these landmines. That is why you were injured." - "Naw Paw Htoo Mu" (F, 25), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #12, 11/00)

"There is no compensation. If we die when we go [to porter], we die like the insects." - "Saw Eh Kaw" (M, 40), forcibly relocated villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #124, 3/02)

"Aaaa had his leg blown off by a landmine. We had to carry him back ourselves, the men carried him. The soldiers would not do it. We hope that one day we will get peace." - "Naw Paw Htoo Mu" (F, 25), villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #12, 11/00)

"They [SPDC] didn't look after them [the landmine victims] and they continued to force us to carry their loads. Then we had to go again and again. The victim's siblings or parents would have to go [for portering] and did not have time to look after them. They [SPDC] did not take responsibility and forced the family to go [for

portering]. The victims were left at home without anyone to take care of them. They could do nothing. We had to carry the load for them, and we still do."-"Naw Paw Eh" (F, 18), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

"When my son was alive he could help me, because I can't work. I can't carry, so he would look after me. When he went to Kler Lah, he hit a Burmese landmine, so now there is no one who can help me. ... When their father died, the oldest one [son] was eight years old and the younger one was four years old. Now, the older one is fourteen years old and the younger one is ten. When I think about it

[losing both her husband and her son], my heart nearly breaks, but my relatives encourage me so I can stay. If it were not for them, my heart would be broken and I would die." - "Naw Paw Ghee" (F, 45), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview # 171, 3/2002)

The internally displaced villagers in Toungoo District suffer more from the landmines than the Nyein Chan Yay villagers. Landmines continue to be one of the leading causes of injury and death among the internally displaced villagers. The SPDC deliberately targets displaced villagers by laying landmines on the paths that they use, in their fields, and in their villages after the inhabitants have fled into the jungle. Displaced villagers who have been arrested by SPDC troops have frequently been forced to porter loads and ordered to walk in front of the soldiers as human minesweepers [see 'Arrest and Torture']. Internally displaced villagers who are wounded by landmines often die before they can receive medical treatment. It can sometimes take days for the villagers to carry a wounded person to where a medical team or a clinic is. The medics often have insufficient medicines and equipment to take care of landmine injuries.

"I stepped on a landmine. It was on March 22nd 2002 at 1:55 [pm]. I went to my hill field and when I was coming back I stepped on the landmine beside the Klay Loh River." - "Saw Thu Ka Ma" (M, 24), internally displaced villager from D— village, Than Daung township (Interview #184, 4/02)

"Right now, we are hearing that they are [planting] landmines everywhere. They lay landmines on the two paths at Klay Wa. They put landmines on the path we take to go and get food and on the way to the river, so it is not easy

for us to go and get food." - "Saw Ba Kyu" (M, 24), internally displaced villager from M— village, Than Daung township (Interview #143, 3/02)

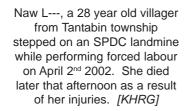
The SPDC has laid many landmines on the paths which they know are used by displaced villagers to go to their fields, to the larger villages where they must buy rice, or to the rivers where they catch fish and collect water. On March 22nd 2002, a small party of displaced villagers left their hiding site in Than Daung township to travel to Kler Lah to buy rice. Upon reaching the Klay Loh River, one of the group, a 14 year old boy, was killed after stepping on a landmine. Some of the men dropped their baskets and rushed to the boy's aid. In doing so, one of these men also stepped on a mine. He too was killed outright and another villager, "Saw Sha Lu", was wounded. "Saw Sha Lu" was lucky to survive. His basket on the ground beside him absorbed most of the blast, allowing him to escape with comparatively few shrapnel wounds. The SPDC has sometimes planted a number of mines in the same location with the logic being that those who attempt to help the wounded are also maimed or killed. Scores of landmines have also been planted in the villagers' fields and plantations after the villagers have fled by SPDC Army columns. The villagers, unaware of the presence of these landmines then go to tend to their crops where many villagers are inevitably wounded, maimed, or killed.

"Recently on March 22nd 2002, our villagers went to Kler Lah to get some food. When we arrived beside the Klay Loh River, some of the people hit the landmines. There were five people who walked before me and there were two people walking behind me. At that time, one of the children stepped on a mine and the mine exploded. I looked at him and I thought that I would go and help him. I took three steps forward and put my basket down so that I could help the child. Another man was following me and

another mine exploded beside me. My basket was broken and I was injured. I looked down and saw that I was wounded three times on my leg, twice on my wrist, and once on my head. I was wounded six times altogether." - "Saw Sha Lu" (M, 26), internally displaced villager from K—village, Than Daung township (Interview #173, 3/02)

"Sometimes they tell us that the villagers are their enemies. Sometimes they put landmines on the path where the villagers travel. When we go out, we don't know that there are landmines and we step on the landmines. Recently, on March 22nd 2002, we went to get food from Kler Lah. Since we didn't know anything [about the mines] we walked beside the river. My older brother and one of his friends hit a mine and died. The rest of the people ran away in fear." - "Saw Pee Thay" (M, 33), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #160, 3/02)

"They [SPDC] come here sometimes to the edge of the village to the betelnut plantations. If they see any people while they are patrolling, they will shoot them. Every time that they come here, they shoot people dead. When they came last time they planted landmines. I didn't know about it and I struck one and it blew my leg off. The gunpowder burned my left leg and my right leg was blown off. ... [Prior to this] they arrested me and took me to Kaw Thay Der. They arrested me in my house while I was cooking rice. Four or five of them came in so I could not flee. They released me later and I came back the next morning to look at my betelnut [plantation] at xxxx [village] and I stepped on the landmine. That happened at 8:17 in the morning on March 6th 2002. It was IB #53 [under the order of] Deputy Battalion Commander Aung Koe Lin [who was responsible for planting the mine]. The SPDC shoot and torture people, so I want to say that they [SPDC] should not plant landmines among the places where the villagers are living. They should not do this because they are supposed to be the government." - "Saw Pwih" (M, 37), internally displaced villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #52, 4/02)





VI. Food Security

"The villagers can't work properly. Why? It is because we can't work full time. Sometimes the SPDC demands set tha, or they demand that we carry their rations. We have to go and do loh ah pay at their Army camp. Sometimes we have to go twice a week, and sometimes we have to go once a week. If we have to go many times a year we cannot work for ourselves. We do not have time to do our jobs. It causes problems for our families. We have to work for them and we don't have enough time to work for ourselves. We have to do a lot of things, but we can't do them because we have to work for the SPDC. They force us to work; we have to go to porter and we have to go to do loh ah pay, so we can't work properly for ourselves." - "Saw Y'Gaw Ko" (M, 35), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #132, 12/02)

The struggle to find enough food has become perhaps the most important issue for villagers in Toungoo District, both for *Nyein Chan Yay* villagers and internally displaced villagers in the forest. Almost every villager interviewed by KHRG talked about not having enough food to feed his or her family. Only a very small proportion of villagers are able to get enough food for themselves and their families for the whole year. Most villagers live from day to day hoping that the harvest will be enough this year, or that they will be able to get enough money to buy rice to see them through until the next harvest.

"The villagers here are doing hill fields. Sometimes, the SPDC demands loh ah pay, so we have to go. Some of the families have only one person [who is able to work], so they can't work in their hill fields. We can't work well so we

don't have enough food. We have no income. We have to rely on our cardamom. We get our money from [selling] cardamom. Some people owe people rice and they can't pay it back. Sometimes it causes problems. Some of the parents of the people who are doing hill fields are not well, so they have to go for loh ah pay."-"Saw Ni Ko Win" (M, 44), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #136, 12/02)

Karen villagers in the hills of Toungoo District have traditionally lived as subsistence farmers. Their method of dry hill rice cultivation enables them to grow enough rice to see them through to the next harvest, with very little left to sell or barter. Villagers also usually have small plots where they grow vegetables to supplement their diet. They might also grow some limited cash crops like cardamom, betelnut, or fruit which they can sell or barter for other foodstuffs like salt. Most villagers also raise chickens, ducks and pigs. Under normal, peaceful conditions villagers rarely go without food for very long. This system, however, has been severely disrupted by the SPDC.

"We can never work properly. The SPDC demands that we go over here and over there [for forced labour] so we don't have time to work [for themselves]. This is why we don't have enough food." - "Saw Heh Kay Law" (M, 32), village secretary from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #134, 12/02)

"We have no income. If we work, we can eat. If we don't work, we can't eat. They [the villagers] can't work properly because the SPDC demands loh ah pay very often or once or twice a month

This 54 year old villager has had difficulty finding enough food for herself after her son was executed by the Dam Byan Byaut Kya. [KHRG]

so we can't work for ourselves properly. We don't have enough rice and paddy." - "Saw L'Paw Wah" (M, 42), village secretary from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #137, 12/02)

In the Nyein Chan Yay villages the constant demands for forced labour have a very direct impact on the villagers' ability to have enough food [see 'Forced **Labour**']. Whenever villagers have to go for forced labour it is time that they cannot spend in their fields. By not spending enough time in their fields villagers are unable to plant as much as they normally would. They also do not have enough time to adequately watch over their crop to keep the animals and birds from eating it. At harvest time, if there is too much forced labour the villagers' are unable to harvest their entire crop before the animals eat it. To make up for the shortfall in the harvest, villagers usually try to sell some of their cash crops, poultry or livestock to buy rice. Some villagers may work for more well off villagers as day labourers in the fields or doing odd jobs in the village to get some money. However, the villagers see much of the money they intended to use to buy food going to the SPDC in the form of forced labour fees, fees for competitions or to pay for the officers' pork curry. In addition, the soldiers have stolen or simply killed most of the chickens, ducks and pigs that the villagers used to have, so they cannot sell them to get money [see 'Fees, Extortion and Theft'].

"They [the villagers] can't work properly. The SPDC demands loh ah pay every month and now the weather is not good, so we don't have enough [food]. We can't cut our hill fields on time. We have to find it [more food] at the cardamom and dogfruit [harvest] times." - "Saw Cho Htwe" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #139, 12/02)

"I have to go and work as a hired labourer. If people call me to go and build their house I get 500 Kyat per day. If I go and cut bamboo for a day, I get paid 500 Kyat. I'm already old. I am 78 years old. If I do not work no one will come and feed me. ... It is a problem but I have to just pretend to myself that I am happy." - "Saw Po Htun" (M, 78), internally displaced former village head from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #175, 3/02)

"The villagers have to work fiery and live fiery [without peace]. It is because everything is expensive. We can't work well, so we do not get enough food. We can only make small hill fields. We do not get enough to eat. We can only ever get enough for one or two months ... If we don't have fruit [plantations], we have to go and do day labour at Kler Lah. We can get 250 Kyat per day." - "Saw No Poh" (M, 49), village head from M—village, Than Daung township (Interview #159, 3/02)

The upkeep of a hill field demands a lot of time of the villagers who tend to them. Particularly approaching the harvest season in November and December, villagers must spend much of their time in the fields to scare away the wild animals that come to eat the ripening paddy. The harvest season corresponds with the end of the rainy season, at which time the demands for forced labour are increased to repair the roads and bridges that were damaged or washed away by the monsoon rains. Compounding this are the travel restrictions which the SPDC often imposes on villagers going to their fields. These limit the amount of time which villagers can go to their fields. Sometimes the restrictions completely ban the villagers from leaving their villages [see 'Restrictions']. The restrictions also sometimes stipulate that the villagers may not sleep in their field huts. Some villagers' fields, especially relocated villagers, are very far from the village and can take hours to walk to. Without being able to sleep in their field huts, the villagers are only be able to spend a few hours a day in their fields and are completely unable to scare off any animals that come in the night to eat or trample the crops.

"Sometimes when we are harvesting, they [SPDC] come and demand that we go over here or over here. We have to leave our hill fields and the paddy is destroyed. When a lot of our paddy is destroyed, we don't have enough rice to eat." - "Saw Ni Ko Win" (M, 44), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #136, 12/02)

Many villagers in Toungoo District grow cash crops on small plots of land so that they will have something to sell or barter to buy rice or other foodstuffs to see them through to the next rice harvest. The more common cash crops in the district are cardamom, betelnut, dogfruit, mangosteen, coffee and durian. These crops are easier to maintain than the rice fields, but villagers still find it difficult to have enough time to take care of them or to adequately harvest them when they become ripe. SPDC soldiers sometimes go to the plots when the villagers are not there and steal the fruit, cardamom or betelnut leaving little left for the villagers to harvest. Sometimes the trees are cut down or burned down by the soldiers. The villagers only get money if they can get their crops to a market to sell them and this is often difficult due to the travel restrictions placed on the villagers [see 'Restrictions']. In markets in the district the villagers must produce three to four viss (5-6.5 kgs. / 11-14 lbs.) of cardamom to buy a 50 kilogram (110 lbs.) sack of rice.

"We are not free to work for ourselves. We have to go and carry their rations and do set tha. We don't have enough time to work for ourselves, so we do not have enough food. ... We have to find paddy and rice, but we do not have enough. We have to find more. We have to go and barter our cardamom [in order to buy rice]. We sell our dogfruit and barter it as well. Even when we do this, we don't have enough food." - "Saw Y'Gaw Ko" (M, 35), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #132, 12/02)

"There are only a few people who can grow enough food. There are many people who don't grow enough food, they have to buy it. They get money from their plantations. They can buy food after they get money from their plantations [by selling the harvest]." - "Saw Mya Thu" (M, 45), village tract secretary from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #138, 12/02)

"We have no income. We can get a little bit of money during the cardamom harvest, but it is not enough. They [the villagers] can work properly, but they don't get enough food." - "Saw Pa Say Lah" (M, 48), villager from L—village, Than Daung township (Interview #192, 12/02)

"We have to buy rice in Thauk Yay Ka village. We can get one sack of rice for every three or four viss [5-6.5 kgs. / 11-14 lbs.] of cardamom. Some people are poor and don't have any rice or any cardamom. They cannot do anything and they are faced with starvation. Some of them die." - "Saw Bee L'Koh" (M, 35), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #133, 12/02)

Most items are very expensive in the mountains in Toungoo District. The markets in the far north of Than Daung township were charging 4,500 Kyat for a sack of rice in May 2002, but in as little as six months, the price had doubled to 9,000 Kyat in December of the same year. The prices charged on basic items are twice as high, if not higher in the hills compared to what they are in the markets in Toungoo. In August 2003, a sack (50 kgs. / 110 lbs.) of rice was priced at 6,000 Kyat in Toungoo, while in Kler Lah the same bag would fetch 14,000 or 15,000 Kyat. The price hike is to cover the expenses incurred by the truck drivers as they must pass through no less than seven checkpoints before reaching Kler Lah. The soldiers occupying each of those checkpoints extort a little money as a toll, all of which in turn is passed onto the villagers in the hills. The increasing costs of living are approaching the point where very few villagers are able to buy enough food to feed themselves. Some of the poorer families only have enough food for one meal per day. Previously selfsufficient villagers have been forced to eat rice porridge with a few roots, leaves or bamboo shoots in it to get them through to the harvest. Villagers normally only eat this at the very end of the year if their harvest the previous year was not enough to get them through to the next harvest. In Toungoo District, many villagers are now forced to eat it at the beginning of the rainy season in June with the next harvest five to six months away. Some villagers are only able to eat once a day.

"This year in April and May, one sack [50 kgs. / 110 lbs.] of rice cost 4,500 Kyat, but now [in December, 2002] it costs 9,000 Kyat." - "Saw Bee L'Koh" (M, 35), villager from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #133, 12/02)

"We are faced with a lot of problems. The prices [of food] are increasing, so people can't [afford to] buy food to eat. Some of the poor people can only eat once a day." - "Saw Mya Thu" (M, 45), village tract secretary from xxxxvillage, Than Daung township (Interview #138, 12/02)

"In Kler Lah one sack of rice costs 14-15,000 Kyat. In Taw Oo, it is only 6,000 [Kyat], but when it arrives in Kler Lah and Kaw Thay Der they charge 14-15,000 Kyat for it." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

In a particularly disturbing move, the SPDC in Toungoo District has been periodically blocking the shipment of rice up to market villages in the hills [see 'Restrictions']. Many villagers, without the ability to grow enough rice, depend on this rice to feed their families. When the rice does come the SPDC forces the villagers to pay for a permit before they can buy the rice and limits the amount of rice that a villager can buy. The more rice a villager wants to buy, the more expensive the permit.

"They obstruct us when we have to go to buy rice. Sometimes they close [the roads when we] to go to buy rice. There is no stability for us." - "Saw Y'Gaw Ko" (M, 35), village head from xxxx village, Than Daung township (Interview #132, 12/02)

Internally displaced villagers face even more difficulties getting enough food to eat. Most of the villagers try to sneak back to their rice fields to tend them when there are no SPDC troops around. Others who have been pushed farther away from their fields, try to clear new fields on the sides of the hills. These fields are much smaller than the fields they would normally clear. Clearing and planting the fields can be very dangerous. The smoke from clearing and burning the brush can be seen for miles around, and the villagers stand out distinctly in their open fields on the sides of the hills, making easy targets for SPDC troops. The need to constantly be on the run from the SPDC Army patrols makes it difficult for villagers to have the time to work their fields. Sometimes villagers are forced to leave whole fields unharvested because SPDC troops were operating in the area at harvest time and the villagers were too afraid to go to their fields. At the completion of the 2002 harvest season (November to December) as

many as forty or fifty hill fields were left unharvested in the area close to the Karenni State border. The establishment of the new SPDC Army camps at Ler Wah Moo Thwa Koh and Ler Htoo Day on the Toungoo to Mawchi car road prevented the displaced villagers in that area from harvesting 60-65% of the hill fields located there.

"There are only one or two people who get enough food. Most of the people can't get enough food because the SPDC is active and the people have to flee, so they cannot work for their food. The people who get enough food have to share with the people who do not get enough food." - "Saw Pa Kay Lah" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from P— village, Tantabin township (Interview #85, 7/01)

"Most of the people do not get enough food. The people who get enough food would only be about one third [of the population]. Out of thirty people, only ten of them would get enough food." - "Saw Bway Htoo Lay" (M, 24), internally displaced villager from H— village, Than Daung township (Interview #150, 7/01)

"Each year they have to go to their hill fields with fear because they are close to the SPDC camp. They do not dare to go. This is wasting the villagers' time." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

"Some of the people can get enough rice, but some of them don't get enough food, because they can only cut a little hill field. If they don't get enough food, they have to go and buy rice."

- "Saw Pa Say Lah" (M, 48), internally displaced villager from L— village, Than Daung township (Interview #192, 12/02)

"Because of the SPDC oppression, we don't have any money anymore. We have to work very hard so that we have enough to eat. ... We can't work well inside our own country because the SPDC oppresses us. ... Instead of harvesting 300 viss [490 kgs. / 1080 lbs.], some of the people only get 10 viss [16 kgs. / 36 lbs.]." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from G—village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"They [villagers] cannot work in their hill fields in peace. They only have time to work in seven or eight hill fields out of every twenty. They cannot finish harvesting the other fields, so they must leave the paddy behind because the SPDC disturbs them. This year [2003], the villagers from xxxx [village] and yyyy [village] had to leave forty or fifty hill fields unharvested because the SPDC came and built their camps at Ler Wah Moo Thwa Koh and Ler Htoo Day." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

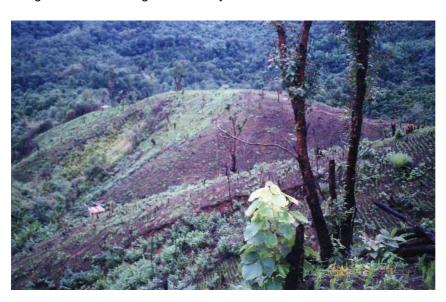


These displaced villagers from Than Daung township are travelling to a nearby village to buy rice because they are unable to grow enough of their own. [KHRG]

"They always have to stay in fear. They have to go and work, but at the same time, they need to listen to the situation. They have to go to their hill fields with fear. They go to their hill fields for one day and then they come back to their places for five days to listen about the situation, so that the time is wasted for them. They do not get as much as they should get with the hill fields that they do. For example, they should get 100 baskets of paddy from one hill field, but instead of getting 100 baskets of paddy, they only get ten or twenty baskets. Because of this, they have a problem with a lack of food. ... Most of the people who have to flee and stay like this are only one, two, or three hours away from [the SPDC camps]." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

A central component of the SPDC's strategy since 1999 has been a sustained effort to deprive the displaced villagers of their food supply, so they will be forced to come down out of the mountains. When the soldiers go into the mountains they target not only the villagers' rice storage barns but also the fields themselves. The soldiers go through the fields trampling or burning the crops just before or at harvest time. Alternatively, they place landmines in the fields so the villagers will be unable to harvest them. More recently, the soldiers have been

sabotaging the fields before they have even been planted. A part of the rice growing cycle is that the villagers must cut down all the brush which has grown up in the field in January or February. The brush is then left to dry until March or April when it is burned. The ash provides the soil with some nutrients and also protects the seeds from being blown away after planting. SPDC columns have taken to burning the cut brush before it has completely dried. The brush then burns unevenly because much of it has not yet dried completely. The result is that the villagers can only use the parts of the field that did completely burn. This drastically cuts down the amount of area that can be planted and results in a much smaller harvest. Some villagers have moved to more remote areas to escape the SPDC patrols. These areas do not have very good soil for growing hill rice and the villagers are unable to get the same yields as before.



Abandoned hill fields in Tantabin township. The increased SPDC military presence in the area owing to the establishment of a number of new SPDC Army camps along the Toungoo-Mawchi car road sent many villagers fleeing into the forest, no longer daring to return to work their fields. [KHRG]

"Recently, when they [SPDC] came to Karen State, they came and burned the plantations.... The paddy that we get is from doing small hill fields and hiding the paddy. They had their military operation campaign and burned everything." - "Saw Hla Kaw Wah" (M, 63), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #93, 4/02)

"We don't get enough food. During the paddy harvest they come and destroy the paddy and the betelnut plantations so that we don't get enough food." - "Naw Ka Ya" (F, 19), internally displaced villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #127, 3/02)

"They have had to flee and stay to the south of the river. There are a lot of mountains. There is a lot of forest. They flee to stay there so that they can make their hill fields there. The soil there for their hill fields is not good, so they cannot get good paddy. If they sow the paddy seeds, they will get back one or two baskets [of paddy]. If we have to tell the truth, the villagers never get enough food." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

The shortage of food has become a very serious problem for the displaced villagers. Many villagers have to eat boiled rice porridge at the beginning of the rainy season or even while they are still preparing their fields. This is usually a last resort option used by villagers to stretch their rice supply until the next harvest. The fact that some villagers are having to

eat it before they have even planted their crop means that they will likely run out of rice long before the harvest. In addition to rice, much of what the villagers eat consists of whatever they can forage from the forest. This is made up mostly of forest vegetables and roots like bamboo shoots. Salt and chillies have become luxuries and meat is almost never eaten except for what can be hunted in the forest or caught in the streams. Even the act of making a fire can be dangerous because the smoke can be seen from a distance and the sound of cutting the firewood may bring the soldiers. Sometimes the wood cannot be lit to make the fires because there is no way to keep it dry. Some villagers borrow food from friends and relatives, but this is also not as feasible as before because now

most villagers do not have enough rice and there are fewer people who they can borrow from. Villagers are having to turn friends away when they come asking for some food.

"Some of the people who have fled to stay in the jungle have to eat rice porridge. They don't even have any salt. They don't dare to go and buy salt. They have to use ash instead of salt." - "Saw Hla Kaw Wah" (M, 63), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #93, 4/02)

"No one stays in the village. If we stayed in the village, the SPDC would come to the village and kill us, so the people no longer dare to stay. We flee and stay in the jungle. We can only get enough food for two or three months. For the

rest of the time we have to go and do day labour [so they can buy food]." - "Saw Law Ko" (M, 57), internally displaced former village head from N—village, Than Daung township (Interview #162, 3/02)

"The people who live there have [cardamom] plantations. ... If they get a little, they go to sell it at the shop and exchange it for some rice. If we look at some of the villagers, the big problem that they have to face is the lack of food, so they have to go and cut Ga Ka Du, Haw Hti La, and Haw La Sho [wild vegetables which grow in the jungle] in the jungle and go to exchange them. Some of them go and dig up some Ku Ti and Nwae Ti [roots which grow in the jungle] so that they can boil them to eat." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

"The reason that the villagers are getting less food is because of the SPDC's oppression. Some of the people have to tell their friends that they cannot help them when they come and ask them if they can have some food. We have to try and look after each other because of the SPDC's oppression. The prices of rice, salt, and fishpaste are all increasing. In the village now, the price of one viss [1.6 kgs. / 3.6 lbs.] of fishpaste is 400 Kyat. Some of the people can't afford this. They have to borrow 3,000 or 4,000 Kyat from their friends so that they can buy salt and fishpaste to eat. They say that 'If you don't give it to me, we will not have anything to eat'." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from G— village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"There is no one who gets enough food. There are many people who don't have enough food. They can't do anything. They have to go out and find it but they can't. For the people who have some food, they have to share a little bit of their food with the others." - "Saw Po Thu" (M, 37), internally displaced villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #86, 7/01)

"There are some people who have to eat rice porridge. Even then they do not have enough food for the whole week. They only have enough food for one or two days. Because of the SPDC, the people don't dare to go out and find food.""Saw Po Thu" (M, 37), internally displaced villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #86, 7/01)

"Now the big problem that they [IDPs] have to face is about food. The [lack of] food causes them a big problem. Right now they have to eat rice porridge." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

In order to supplement the inadequate amount of rice that they are capable of growing, most internally displaced villagers must rely on what money they can obtain by growing cash crops in small clearings in the forest. The money that they raise from selling their harvests is then used to buy rice. Having these small cash crops as their sole source of income, means that the only money they receive comes at the time of the harvest. What money is gained from the sale of their harvest must then be budgeted to keep for the rest of the year. When this money eventually runs out, they must take food on credit, repaying all debts accrued throughout the year after they have reaped and sold their next harvest. The displaced villagers must also get the crop to the market to sell it. This can be a very difficult task because the paths might be mined and SPDC troops will shoot them on sight if they are seen. Once they get to the market village they may also be arrested for not being from the village.

"If there is a shortage of food, we have to take our betelnut and our betelnut leaves to xxxx [village]. We don't have any other income other than cardamom, betelnut, and betelnut leaves." - "Saw Htoo Wee" (M, 52), internally displaced village head from L— village, Than Daung township (Interview #186, 10/02)

"They go and get the rice from xxxx [village]. They have to borrow the rice because they don't have any money [to buy it]. They pay it back after the cardamom harvest." - "Saw Pa Say Lah" (M, 48), internally displaced villager from L— village, Than Daung township (Interview #192, 12/02)

"I sold everything I had so I don't have anything anymore. Now I have to find some vegetables so that I can sell them in xxxx [village]." - "Saw Soe Tint" (M, 60), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #174, 3/02)

Some of the displaced villagers slip into the *Nyein Chan Yay* villages and work as day labourers to get enough money to buy food for their families. While they cannot make much, between 250 and 500 Kyat a day, it is enough to buy some rice to eat. The returns of such work are only outweighed by the risks. By travelling into the larger villages, these labourers run a greatly increased risk of meeting with the SPDC soldiers either on the paths, as they pass by their Army camps, or in the villages themselves.

"They have to go and sell things. The people who have only very little hire themselves out [as itinerant labourers] to get some money that way. When they get a little bit of money, they go to the market and buy some rice for themselves to eat." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

Travelling to one of the larger villages such as Kler Lah, Kaw Thay Der, or Than Daung Gyi is done at great risk. Many of the larger villages possess a strong SPDC presence, greatly increasing the chances of being caught. For this reason, internally displaced villagers rarely enter the villages themselves. Many of them will wait on the outskirts of the village and ask one of the locals to go to the market for them while they hide in the forest until the villager returns, goods in hand. Some villages have established small, secret 'jungle markets' to serve this purpose. At these markets the displaced villagers are able to personally sell their goods in exchange for rice without having to go to an SPDC-controlled village. These markets are considered illegal by the SPDC and they have been attacked in the past by SPDC soldiers who entered shooting and then looted the market after the villagers had fled. Owing to the remoteness of some of the hiding sites, a lot of displaced villagers must walk for up to two days over the rugged hills to the market. The steepness of the hills that they must traverse for their return journey means that many displaced villagers are only able to carry a relatively small amount of rice. This means they must then repeat the journey again in as little as a week as their supplies dwindle. Some of the villagers living in the more remote areas seemingly only just arrive home before they need to leave again. The journey itself is very dangerous because of the many SPDC patrols and Army camps. The SPDC also knows some of the paths the villagers use and plants landmines along them to stop the displaced villagers from coming to get rice. Many villagers have been killed or maimed by these landmines while trying to get rice for their families.

"Right now, the villagers buy their rice from xxxx and yyyy [villages]. The villagers who stay outside don't dare to go directly to xxxx, because they are afraid of the Burmese [soldiers]. They are afraid of the SPDC Army. They have to go carefully. They have to go and contact the villagers who stay in xxxx and yyyy. They contact the villagers who stay inside xxxx or yyyy and have them carry the rice out of the village for them [where they are waiting]. They have to go and carry like that, the villagers who stay outside don't dare to go directly into the village." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

"I can't work very well. I have to go to Than Daung to buy [rice]. I have to walk for two days. We have many problems. If the SPDC are on the path, they will take the people's things. When we go, we don't go on the big [car] road. We only cross the road a few times. If we meet with them when we cross the road it causes problems for us. Our family does not have enough food to eat." - "Saw Kyu Heh Law" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #152, 1/02)

"Sometimes, we have to go and buy rice from xxxx [village] and carry it back in fear. If they see us on the way they ask us 'Are you carrying that rice for yourself or for other people [portering it for the SPDC]?' If we tell them that it is our own rice, we then have to beg them not to take it. We say to them 'If you take it, we will not have any more food to eat'. If we give them 200 or 300 Kyat, they let us go." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from G— village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

"[When going to the market,] if the SPDC sees us we have to lie and tell them that we live in the relocation site. We have to lie to them and tell them that we aren't returning to our village. If we don't lie, it will cause a problem for us." - "Saw Soe Tint" (M, 60), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #174, 3/02)

Very little in the way of food relief comes to the villagers hiding in the forests of Toungoo District. Because of the long distance and the steepness of the mountains, Karen relief organisations usually simply provide the villagers with some money with which to buy rice. This necessitates having to then go to one of the *Nyein Chan Yay* villages to buy the rice with the usual dangers mentioned above. The money is usually only enough for about two month's worth of rice. The relief organisations cannot reach all of the displaced villagers and most have to make do with what they have.

VII. Future of the Area

"Each year they torture us worse and everything that we see [them do] is more severe. If the Burmese [soldiers] do not go back, how many people are going to die in the future? We wish that all of the Burmese [soldiers] would go back to their places. If they don't go back, our villagers will be faced with more and more trouble. ... We do not know our future. Now, if they force us to carry a load, we have to go. We cannot refuse them. We do not know if in our future we will die or if we will be safe if we have to go and carry a load for them." - "Naw Paw Eh" (F, 18), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #81, 4/01)

While the SPDC is gradually increasing its control over Toungoo District, it will be some time yet before their control is total. The KNLA has thus far successfully managed to hold out and continue its low-intensity guerrilla war against the SPDC Army units stationed there. The current verbal ceasefire between the KNU and the SPDC has had the least effect in Toungoo District. Although the frequency of engagements has declined, KNLA and SPDC military units still clash in the area. No territory has been delineated between the two sides in the ceasefire talks and units from both sides occasionally run into each other. KNLA units are particularly frustrated at having to stand by and watch while the SPDC repairs its roads, builds new camps, builds supply stockpiles in the camps and brings in more troops to the area. This frustration has spilled over into several engagements with SPDC forces. The ceasefire is still very tenuous, but if it breaks down and fighting resumes, the KNLA is very adept at using the rugged. mountainous terrain of the district to its advantage and will be able to resist the SPDC for some time to come.

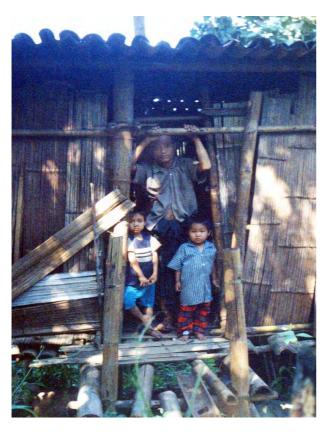
"We can do nothing because we are afraid of them. Even though they said that they will not use their power, they will still use it because they have weapons with them. They cannot stay alive without using their power; they can stay alive only if they use power." - "Saw Bo Kee" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #75, 7/02)

"We are oppressed in [terms of] education, economy, social duties and obligations, food, and travelling. We are oppressed in everything. Why? ... Now, the civilians can't work for their food very well. To have our lives, we must dig the ground [cultivate their hill fields] until our fingernails and toenails fall out. How can we learn? We don't have any time to think about economics, social duties and obligations, health, or education anymore. Now it is too hard to stay alive. The SPDC soldiers who go to the frontline cause a lot of problems for us. Now they have closed the road and they don't allow us to buy



Without adequate health care, and with no money to purchase any medication, this 26 year old internally displaced mother is unable to care for her children as she lays stricken with malaria. [KHRG]

goods. When the civilians go in the jungle, they meet with the SPDC soldiers. The women want to go to their hill fields, but when they go, they meet with the SPDC so they do not dare to go anymore. They come back here and stay at home. If the SPDC soldiers see a beautiful woman they will want to touch her and cause many problems for her. ... They [SPDC] say to the people who are in the prime of their lives, 'Friend, come and show us the way.' But they really want to send them to the dead country [to kill them]." - "Saw Hla Kaw Wah" (M, 63), villager from K— village, Tantabin township (Interview #93, 4/02)



An internally displaced family hding in the forest of Tantabin township. Families such a this must run for their lives whatever they can carry whenever an SPDC Army patrol draws near. [KHRG]

"We don't want fighting in our country. We want to stay in our place peacefully. This is what we need. We want our plants to grow, we don't want fighting. We just want to improve our knowledge and our religion. Our life is unstable. We don't know how we are going to work for food. We are afraid of them. We are afraid that they will hit us or that they will kill us." - "Saw Noh Lee" (M, 45), internally displaced village head from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #181, 3/02)

The increase in the number of *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* units operating in Toungoo District is cause for some concern. While they have not been engaging in the brutal behaviour that characterised their early existence, the threat is still there. The fact that some, or all, of these units are now becoming part of the standard battalion structure lends itself to the possibility that now every battalion commander can call on his own execution squad to carry out his dirty work.

"The civilians are oppressed by the SPDC. They give priority to their armies. They do not care for the civilians." - "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M, 47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)

"We have to do whatever they tell us. If we don't, they will hit us. We are afraid of them. We have to work with understanding, otherwise they will hit us. They go and take some people's belongings and say to them, 'You live in Burma and you can't even speak Burmese.'"- "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from G— village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

A key component of the SPDC's campaign for control in Toungoo District is its ever spreading web of roads and Army camps. The now completed road from Toungoo to Mawchi cuts the district in two and combined with the camps along it and the patrols between them, is a substantial barrier to movement. The road from Kler Lah to Bu Sah Kee is another barrier. The SPDC is now able to move troops along these roads and supply its camps more efficiently. This was demonstrated when it used the road to move troops into the area and keep them supplied for its offensive in Karenni State during December 2003 and January 2004. In addition to the roads, the SPDC has also constructed many new camps throughout the region. These camps are small, but just by being there they provide places for the SPDC to send patrols out from and to observe the surrounding area. The KNU and villagers are finding it more difficult to move around. Internally displaced villagers who have fields in sight of the new camps are now only able to work their fields at night.

"The SPDC [built a new] camp at Ler Wah Moo Thwa Koh. They built their camp there and now the villagers from Wa Soe and Sho Ser have fled away from there and stay in the jungle." - "Saw Ku Lu" (M, 26), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 8/03)

"Before they made the car road, their Army was active on and around the [site of the] car road so that the KNLA couldn't come and attack them.

Many battalions settled down. There were ten battalions in all. They came to take responsibility to secure the car road. They were operating around the car road. The villagers who stayed close [to the site of the road] always had to flee."

- "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

Although forced labour has decreased somewhat in the past couple of years, villagers continue to say that it is at intolerable levels. The roads will still have to be repaired after every rainy season and supplies brought up to the camps along the roads and in the hills. The new camps and additional soldiers in the area will mean more demands for forced labour at the camps. Already villagers have to go to build the camps for the soldiers. These new camps will also have to be supplied and it will be the villagers who will have to supply the labour to porter the supplies up to the camps.

"I wonder when we will have peace. There is no peace for me. They call us [for portering] and demand that we pay them the porter fees. They demand money, so people have to pay. If the people can't pay, they scold them. They are still forcing people to pay for porters. They said that there was going to be no more porters, but they still force us to go and work. I think that we will have to pay until we die, so there will be no peace for us."-"Naw Thet Wah" (F, 58), internally displaced villager from P— village, Than Daung township (Interview #164, 3/02)

"What the Burmese soldiers are doing does not look like soldiers; they look like robbers and thieves. The soldiers should take care of the civilians, but now it is the civilians who are taking care of them. They force the civilians to take care of them [provide them with food] and to guard them [to act as human shields] when they travel so that they do not get hurt. A government has to look after its civilians, but now the civilians are looking after them. An army has to take care of its civilians, but now the civilians have to take care of them." - Saw Ba Aye (M, 47), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #55, 4/02)

The widespread use of landmines by both the SPDC and the KNLA will continue to be a problem for the villagers for years to come, with neither group removing unexploded mines or even mapping their placement. The villagers, unaware of the locations of these mines will continue to be wounded, maimed and killed by them. The factory-manufactured landmines used by the SPDC, such as the Burmesemade MM2 antipersonnel blast mine remain active for years after placement. The SPDC's penchant for laying the mines in villagers' fields, in villages and along the paths that villagers use, will make many

"They shot him dead in front of us ..."

"When they came to the village, all of the villagers fled, but our family didn't flee because one of our family members was sick and died. They arrested twelve of us. The troops were from IB #20. ... They forced us to carry [their supplies] and they forced us to go in front [to walk in front of the soldiers]. They tortured us when they took us to Kaw Law Ka. They shot one person dead, beat one person to death, and raped one person. They called one of the porters in front of us and shot him dead in front of us. His name was Saw Abraham. They shot him dead on April 20th 1997 at 7:00 o'clock in the evening. The person that they beat to death was named Saw Taw Naw. [The woman who was raped was] Naw aaaa, she was 27 years old. The Commander raped her himself. The name of the Commander was Min Tha. ... They also arrested and tortured other people and beat them. They tortured people with fire. They heated the iron and burned us with it. They didn't feed us, our friends from xxxx [village] came and fed us. Our friends came and got us out. They [SPDC] demanded 30,000 Kyat for each person." -"Saw Ya Ya Kee" (M, 47), internally displaced villager from L- village, Than Daung township (Interview #185, 10/02)

places in Toungoo District uninhabitable for many years until the mines can be removed.

"Can we have peace? Our parents suffered, do we still have to suffer like this? We are getting older and older, will we have to always suffer like this?" - "Saw Kloh Law" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from K— village (Interview #144, 11/00)

"Our civilians have to travel in fear so that they can work and eat. We have to be afraid of the SPDC and be aware of the SPDC. If they see us they will kill us, but we still have to go [to their plantations]. If we do not go there, we will not be able to eat anymore. ... We have to work with understanding. We have to work with fear." - "Saw Hser Paw" (M, 25), internally displaced village head from G— village, Than Daung township (Interview #165, 3/02)

Arguably, the most immediate problem presently facing *Nyein Chan Yay* villagers and internally displaced villagers alike is that of food security. Only a very small percentage of *Nyein Chan Yay* villagers

are able to get enough food, despite living in 'stable' villages with their fields nearby. None of the internally displaced villagers interviewed for this report claimed to receive enough food. The SPDC's continued destruction of both the Nyein Chan Yay villagers' and internally displaced villagers' rice fields and plantations has only resulted in exacerbating this problem. Although the Nyein Chan Yay villagers have better access to food, this is sometimes upset by the SPDC's periodic withholding of rice from the villagers in the hills by blocking the shipments of rice coming in from the plains in the west of the district. The food security situation will only become worse as the SPDC increases its militarization of the district. More camps and more troops will mean more forced labour and less time for the villagers to work in their fields. It will also mean more fees that have to be paid and more looting of the villagers' rice supplies, chickens and livestock.

"I am already old. I can't travel anymore. We will have our lives here and we will die here. I

don't want to go to any other place anymore. They can kill us if they want to kill us. If they want us to stay alive, then they can allow us to stay alive. Our civilians want stay peacefully. We want to be able work properly, we want to be able to work freely. They come from Bu Sah Kee and demand dog



The countless landmines strewn across Toungoo District will remain a threat to villagers and IDPs alike for years to come. The SPDC continues to plant landmines in areas frequented by civilians. This villager was killed outright after stepping on an SPDC mine in March 2002 while going to buy food for his family. [KHRG]

and pork to eat. We have fed them for a long time already so we have nothing left to give them anymore." - "Saw K'Paw Heh" (M, 53), internally displaced villager from K— village, Than Daung township (Interview #182, 3/02)

"There is not enough food to eat because the Burmese [soldiers] have been active. We are afraid of them and we have not dared to go to work in our hill fields. The Burmese [soldiers] would torture us so we are afraid of them. When we go to work in our hill fields, we have to do so with caution." - "Saw Eh Law Kaw Ko" (M, 53), internally displaced villager from D— village, Than Daung township (Interview #147, 3/01)

"I can't tell you everything. If I had to tell you everything that they do, we would not have enough time. They are getting worse. We are very tired. [They have been doing this] for many months and many years, so we are not able to work well. The costs [of living] are increasing. If we don't work we can't get any money and we can't buy food to eat. We have to go and work for them, but we also have to work for ourselves."
- "Saw Soe Ghee" (M, 42) villager from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #26, 6/01)

The SPDC's campaign to drive all of the villagers out of the hills and into relocation sites or villages under SPDC control is failing. The conditions in the relocations sites and *Nyein Chan Yay* villages are so bad that many villagers choose not to live in them if they can. Many villagers who have lived under the SPDC have later fled due to the heavy fees, forced labour and inability to find enough time to work their fields. The villagers are well aware of the dangers of living on the run in the forest, but many still choose

option. Karen villagers have strong ties to their land and would prefer to live on it, or at least near it, if possible. Hiding in the hills is the only real other option; the refugee camps in Thailand are too far away and the other Karen Districts to the south and Karenni State to the east all have their own problems and are unable to provide for villagers who

arrive there. The internally displaced villagers in Toungoo District will have to continue to make do with what they can and what little aid reaches them from the outside.

"Everybody hopes to come back to stay in their own place. Most of the villagers hope to come back to their own places. They say, 'This country never has peace. We want to go back and stay in our village, but we have to flee and stay like this. We don't want to stay like this anymore. We always have to live in fear.' They don't want to live like that anymore. They want to go back and live in their own homes. ... It is difficult for them. They have to stay in the jungle, and it is

not easy to come to a refugee camp [in Thailand] because there are many troubles. The way is far. It is too far. ... [It takes] about ten days or sometimes more than ten days. It is difficult for them to come with children and old people. There are also enemies on the way. They have to come and pass between the enemies. It is not easy. The other thing is that they do not want to leave their area and their homes. They want to stay in their area. If they are going to die, they want to die in their area. If they are going to live, they want to live in their area. ... Right now they need peace. They want to go back and stay in their place and want to be able to work so that they can eat in peace. Most of the villagers told me this." - "Saw Eh Doh" (M, 25), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 2/01)

"If it is a Nyein Chan Yay [Peace] village, when the SPDC come, the women and children don't need to flee, but the men have to flee or they will be taken as porters. If it is not a Nyein Chan Yay

village. villagers will flee with their pigs and chickens before the SPDC arrive if they hear that the SPDC is coming. They [the villagers] are divided into two groups like that." - "Saw Bee Thaw" (M, 30), KHRG field researcher (Interview #2, 2/ 01)

"We have to flee and live in the jungle. It is not only now, but ever since

we have known ourselves. We have had to flee like this many times because there is no peace in our country. There is fighting in our country. We hope to have peace in our country so that our villagers can go back to their villages and work. This is our wish." - "Saw Hser Nay Soh" (M, 30), internally displaced villager from S— village, Than Daung township (Interview #156, 1/02)

Talks between the KNU and the SPDC over the conditions for a more lasting ceasefire are likely to continue for some time. Although they are hopeful, there is not much optimism among Karen villagers

that the ceasefire will amount to any real benefits for them. After 55 years of fighting with the SPDC, most Karen villagers are very distrustful of any promises from regimes in Rangoon. Whether there is a ceasefire or not, the past experiences of other ethnic groups have shown that there have never been any political settlements agreed to after the ceasefires. Instead the villagers are forced to live in a type of limbo, where the guns are silent but the armies are still there. As long as there is no political settlement and the armies remain in Toungoo District, the villagers will have to provide forced labour, pay extortion money and see their belongings, crops and animals stolen.

"We need everything for the village. We need medicine for health, and we need materials so we can work. For the whole village, the whole township, and the whole district, the most important thing that we need is freedom. We don't need conflict in Burma anymore. We need freedom for the whole country of Burma. I think

> that if we have freedom, it will be easier to build, to work, and to get an education." -"Saw Pa Kay Lah" (M, 45), internally displaced villager from village, Tantabin township (Interview #85, 7/01)

"At this time, the power is in their hands, and it is the time when we have to suffer." - "Saw Htoo Kwee" (M,



The increased militarization of Toungoo District and the intensified oppression that follows it sends many more families, such as this one from Tantabin township fleeing into the jungle where they hope to escape detection by the SPDC. [KHRG]

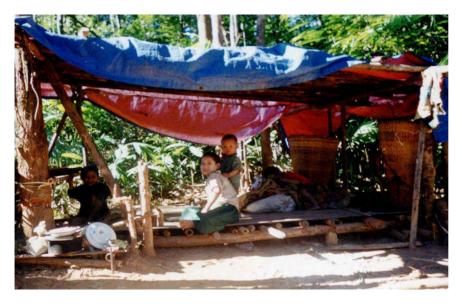
47), village head from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #13, 4/01)

"Whenever their leaders speak to them about torturing us, they say that they haven't. [They say] that they haven't oppressed us. They are lying when they say that they don't abuse us. It is true when we tell you about what the people from xxxx village have faced." - "Saw Ghay Hser" (M, 52), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #70, 7/02)

"I would like to tell you many things. I want to say that the SPDC military junta is a bad government who doesn't love the civilians. I worked for the SPDC council [VPDC] as an elder for eight years. When I was working for them I saw that the villagers were faced with many problems such as portering and many other types of demands. I have seen it and I even had to arrange for it. I have experienced it and passed through it, so all that I say is true. I feel very bad about that. I am now sixty years old and I wish that our people can be freed from being slaves. A government must love her civilians, but this government does not love her civilians. Moreover, she oppresses her civilians and tortures her civilians. It makes me feel very bad in my heart. If it is possible, I want to see my Karen people delivered from porter fees and loh ah pay fees before I die." - "Saw Moo" (M, 60), pastor from xxxx village, Tantabin township (Interview #71, 7/02)



A 25 year old villager receiving treatment for bullet wounds in his buttocks that he sustained while portering for the SPDC. He was ambushed by Dam Byan Byaut Kya soldiers while portering a load along the Toungoo-Mawchi car road fro a regular SPDC Army battalion on June 16 2003. [KHRG]



An internally displaced family hiding within their small makeshift hut deep in the jungles of Tantabin township in June 2003. [KHRG]

Appendix A: Index of Interviews and Field Reports

This index summarises the interviews, field reports, and documents quoted in this report. The interview numbers correspond to those used in the quote captions. All names of those interviewed have been changed, and their village names omitted. In the summaries below: FL = Forced Labour, FR = Forced relocation, RS = Relocation Site, LOR = Letter of Recommendation, GRU = Guerrilla Retaliation Unit, IDP = Internally Displaced Persons. Under 'Nat.' (Nationality), K = Karen, B = Burman, L = Lisu; Under 'Twp.' (Township), T = Tantabin, D = Than Daung. For the convict porter interviews, 'St/ Div.' = State or Division.

Field Reports and Interviews with KHRG Field Researchers

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Nat.	Twp.	Summary
FR1	2/00	Field Report 1				D	FR, destruction of plantations
FR2	7/00	Field Report 2			K	D	Restrictions on keeping firearms
FR3	8/00	Field Report 3			K	D	Village head, GRU, killings, FL
FR4	7/02	Field Report 4					Incident reports from KNU regarding documented
							human rights violations in 2001 and 2002
FR5	4/03	Field Report 5					KNU battle news
FR6	12/03	Field Report 6					KNU media release
FR7	3/04	Field Report 7			K	D/T	General situation report, IDPs, military situation
FR8	6/04	Field Report 8			K	D/T	General situation, roads, IDPs, military situation,
							looting, village destruction, killings
FR9	7/04	Field Report 9			K	T	FL, health, military, restrictions, FL, looting,
1	2/01	"Saw Eh Doh"	M	25	K		General situation in Toungoo District, killings,
							roads, GRU, FR, FL, extortion, IDP, food,
							landmines, village destruction
2	2/01	"Saw Bee Thaw"	M	30	K		General situation in Toungoo District, GRU, IDP
3	8/02	"Saw Htoo Say"	M	38	K		General situation in Toungoo District, GRU, roads,
							IDP, crop destruction, landmines, killings
4	8/03	"Saw Ku Lu"	M	26	K		General situation in Toungoo District, GRU, SPDC,
							tourism, roads, FL, food, landmines, IDP, killings

Interviews with Villagers in Tantabin Township

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Nat.	Village	Summary
5	10/00	"Saw Htoo Pa"	M		K	xxxx	FR, FL, extortion, demands
6	10/00	"Saw Plaw Kee"	M		K	xxxx	Arrest, torture, extortion, FR, village
							destruction
7	11/00	"Saw Nay Min"	M	34	K	xxxx	FR, FL, extortion,
8	11/00	"Naw Mu Ko"	F	60	K	xxxx	FR, FL, extortion
9	11/00	"Naw Than Wah"	F	38	K	xxxx	FL, landmines
10	11/00	"Saw Ler Thoo"	M	30	K	xxxx	FL,
11	11/00	"Saw Tha Say"	M	59	K	xxxx	Commandeered vehicles
12	11/00	"Naw Paw Htoo Mu"	F	25	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, torture, landmines,
							minesweeping,
13	4/01	"Saw Htoo Kwee"	M	47	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, roads, killing, FR, torture,
							education, censorship

14	4/01	"Saw Maw Shwe"	M	39	K	202202	Extortion, FL
15	4/01		F	52	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, education
16	4/01	"Naw Hser Lay" "Saw K'Baw"	г М	43	K	xxxx	
17	4/01	"Saw K Baw "Saw Th'Kee Soe"	M	50	K	xxxx	FR, landmines, extortion, FL
18	4/01	"Saw Soe Win"	M	55	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, torture, village shelling, Extortion by GRU, shooting
19	4/01		M	38	K	xxxx	, c
20	4/01	"Saw Aye Min" "Saw Baw Htoo"	M	47	K	xxxx	Extortion by GRU Extortion, FL, FR, education, censorship,
20	4/01	Saw Baw Hioo	IVI	47	N.	xxxx	roads, torture, landmines
21	4/01	"Saw Pee Thaw"	M	46	K	rrrr	IDPs, theft, crop destruction
22	4/01	"Saw Fee Thaw "Saw Eh K'Mu"	M	51	K	xxxx xxxx	Extortion, looting by GRU, FL, torture,
22	4/01	Saw Eli K Mu	IVI	31	IX.	лллл	landmines, roads
23	6/01	"Saw Toh Wah"	M	30	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands
24	6/01	"Saw Khaw Thu"	M	45	K	xxxx	FL
25	6/01	"Saw Kilaw Thu "Saw K'Paw Doh"	M	49	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, IDP situation, torture
26	6/01	"Saw Soe Ghee"	M	42	K	xxxx	Costs, education, FL, extortion, demands
27	7/01	"Saw Ta Pla"	M	21	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands, FL, wounded by
21	7/01	Saw Ta Tia	141	21	17	лллл	crossfire
28	7/01	"Saw Su Wah Lay"	M	40	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands
29	7/01	"Saw Kya Leh"	M	25	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands
30	7/01	"Saw Keh Su"	M	50	K	xxxx	Extortion, FL, demands, villagers
	,,01		1,1				punished for fighting
31	7/01	"Naw Lah Mu"	F	20	K	xxxx	FL, landmines, minesweeping
32	1/02	"Saw Maw Htoo"	M	46	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, demands,
33	1/02	"Saw Lay Doh"	M	29	K	xxxx	Extortion, FL
34	1/02	"Saw Ghay Thu"	M	55	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, debt
35	1/02	"Saw Khaw"	M	45	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, demands
36	1/02	"Saw Lay Htoo"	M	31	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands
37	1/02	"Saw Kee Lee"	M	40	K	xxxx	FL, religious and cultural persecution
38	1/02	"Saw Way K'Lu Say"	M	50	K	xxxx	Demands, extortion, religious and
							cultural persecution
39	1/02	"Saw Lu Mu"	M	30	K	xxxx	Demands by GRU
40	1/02	"Saw Hla Min"	M	40	K	xxxx	FL, extortion
41	1/02	"Saw Kler Htoo"	M	38	K	xxxx	GRU, extortion, demands
42	1/02	"Saw Poh Law"	M	36	K	xxxx	FL, child labour
43	1/02	"Saw Hser Su Moo"	M	20	K	xxxx	FL
44	1/02	"Saw Aung Htwe"	M	41	K	xxxx	FL, food scarcity, torture
45	1/02	"Saw Baw Koh"	M	30	K	xxxx	Extortion, FL
46	1/02	"Saw Kweh Pa"	M	52	K	xxxx	Food scarcity, arrest, LOR, torture
47	1/02	"Saw Thay Pa Doh"	M	49	K	xxxx	Torture
48	1/02	"Saw Nu Ku"	M	38	K	xxxx	Torture and extortion by GRU, FL
49	1/02	"Saw Ta Shwe"	M	53	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands, forced to buy goods
50	3/02	"Saw Htun Aye"	M	40	K	xxxx	FL, minesweeping, FR, theft
51	3/02	"Saw Hser Moo"	M	29	K	xxxx	FR, FL, landmines, minesweeping,
							human shields, labourers
52	4/02	"Saw Pwih"	M	37	K	xxxx	Landmines, FL
53	4/02	"Saw Koh Gyi"	M	40	K	xxxx	FL, landmines, minesweeping
54	4/02	"Saw Ghee Soe"	M	35	K	xxxx	FL, food scarcity
55	4/02	"Saw Ba Aye"	M	47	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, religious persecution, rice
							permits
56	4/02	"Saw Min Htoo"	M	30	K	xxxx	FL, LOR
57	4/02	"Saw Si Aye Lah"	M	26	K	xxxx	FL
58	4/02	"Saw Say Lee"	M	40	K	xxxx	Landmines, minesweeping, FL
59	4/02	"Saw Toh Lay"	M	30	K	xxxx	Demands, FL, arrest, torture
60	4/02	"Naw Paw Htoo"	F	27	K	xxxx	Life under the SPDC, FL
61	4/02	"Saw Ka Neh"	M	46	K	xxxx	FL
62	4/02	"Naw Mu Ha"	F	46	K	xxxx	Child labour
	4/02	"Naw Meh Nay Say"	F	17	K	xxxx	FL

64	4/02	"Naw Kyi Koh"	F	12	K	xxxx	Child labour, minesweeping
65	4/02	"Naw Paw Soh"	F	22	K	xxxx	Killings, FL, extortion
66	7/02	"Saw Htay Mu"	M	34	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands, food destruction,
							food scarcity
67	7/02	"Naw Hsa Maw"	F	48	K	xxxx	Demands by GRU, FL, crop destruction
68	7/02	"Naw Po Ka Bla"	F	40	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, SPDC withholding rice,
							rice permits
69	7/02	"Thra Po Lah"	M	38	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands, rice permits
70	7/02	"Saw Ghay Hser"	M	52	K	xxxx	GRU, demands, FL, extortion
71	7/02	"Saw Moo"	M	60	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, torture, theft, destruction
							of property
72	7/02	"Thra Ler Wah Moo"	M	38	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands, rice permits
73	7/02	"Naw Kler Keh Tha"	F	48	K	xxxx	Demands by GRU, FL, food destruction
74	7/02	"Saw Eh Kaw Htoo"	M	25	K	xxxx	FL, extortion
75	7/02	"Saw Bo Kee"	M	50	K	xxxx	FL, Order 1/99, landmines

Interviews with IDPs in Tantabin Township

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Nat.	Village	Summary
76	10/00	"Saw Mu Wah"	M		K	S	Village destruction, torture, landmines, extortion
77	12/00	"Saw Maw Thee"	M	23	K	xxxx	Killings
78	4/01	"Saw Nu Pweh Koh"	M	27	K	M	IDPs, SPDC, theft, shootings, destruction of property
79	4/01	"Naw Wee Wee"	F	51	K	Н	Extortion, FL, theft
80	4/01	"Saw Thay Myo"	M	48	K	Y	GRU, extortion, FL, killing
81	4/01	"Naw Paw Eh"	F	18	K	K	FL, theft, landmines, killing, education, health
82	4/01	"Saw Meh Lah"	M	27	K	M	IDPs, looting, killings, health, education
83	6/01	"Saw Tay Kee"	M	55	K	P	IDP situation
84	6/01	"Saw Per"	M		K	K	Killing, looting, IDP situation
85	7/01	"Saw Pa Kay Lah"	M	45	K	P	Killing, IDP situation, food scarcity
86	7/01	"Saw Po Thu"	M	37	K	K	IDP situation, food scarcity, crop destruction, education, health
87	1/02	"Naw Mi Mu Wah"	F	40	K	Y	Food scarcity, killings by GRU
88	1/02	"Naw Thay Paw"	F	45	K	Y	Food scarcity, killings by GRU
89	1/02	"Naw Mu Kaw"	F	54	K	Y	Food scarcity, killings by GRU
90	1/02	"Naw Lay Mo"	F	33	K	Y	Food scarcity, killings by GRU
91	1/02	"Saw Bway Htoo"	M	32	K	Y	FL, killings
92	4/02	"Saw Dee Ghay"	M	37	K	H	Landmines, FL
93	4/02	"Saw Hla Kaw Wah"	M	63	K	K	FL, killings, village destruction, <i>Pyitthu Sit</i> militia, food destruction, food shortages, SPDC withholding rice
94	1/02	"Saw Maung Gyi"	M	43	K	P	FL, torture, extortion by GRU
95	3/02	"Naw Pu Htoo Po"	F	19	K	K	FL, minesweeping, food destruction, theft, torture,

Interviews with Villagers in Than Daung Township

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Nat.	Village	Summary
96	10/00	"Saw Pu Ko Wah"	M	35	K	xxxx	FR, FL, extortion
97	11/00	"Saw Ba Htee"	M	40	K	xxxx	GRU, torture, shootings, forced
							marriages, attempted rape, landmines,
							extortion, crop destruction, tourism
98	3/01	"Saw Kler Paw"	M	38	K	xxxx	LOR, GRU, torture
99	1/02	"Naw Si Si Paw"	F	65	K	xxxx	FL, landmines
100	1/02	"Saw Taw Ni"	M	35	K	xxxx	FL, wounded by crossfire
101	1/02	"Saw Peh Yah"	M	13	K	xxxx	Child labour, wounded by crossfire
102	1/02	"Saw Kaw Kwee"	M	26	K	XXXX	Arrest, torture
103	3/02	"Saw Zaw Oo"	M	47	K	xxxx	LOR, FR, looting, relocation sites, FL
104	3/02	"Saw Pa Heh"	M	47	K	xxxx	FR, looting, food scarcity, FL
105	3/02	"Saw Mya Sein"	M	51	K	XXXX	LOR, food scarcity
106	3/02	"Saw K'Paw"	M	46	K	XXXX	FL, extortion, minesweeping
107	3/02	"Naw Shi Shi"	F	48	K	xxxx	FR, landmines, FL, extortion
108	3/02	"Saw Nay Paw Bee"	M	28	K	xxxx	IDP situation, FR, looting, demands,
109	3/02	"G EI D "	F	40	K	200000	health FR, education, killings by GRU
		"Saw Thay Po"				xxxx	
110	3/02	"Saw Myo"	M	40	K	xxxx	Food scarcity, cash crops, FL
111	3/02	"Saw Pa Tray" "Naw Eh Kri Mu"	M F	52 50	K K	xxxx	FL, extortion, demands, beatings
112	3/02	"Naw En Kri Mu"	F	50	K	xxxx	Theft, FL, shelling villages, attempted
113	3/02	"Saw Hla Dah"	M	51	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands, theft, FL
113	3/02	"Saw Pa Thaw"	M	30	K	xxxx	Debt, beatings, rape, minesweeping,
114	3/02	Saw Fa Illaw	1V1	30	IX.	AAAA	landmines, FL
115	3/02	"Saw Dah Dah"	M	68	K	xxxx	FL, beatings, reduction in demands
116	3/02	"Saw Than Htoo"	M	37	K	xxxx	FL, beatings
117	3/02	"Saw San Pweh"	M	45	K	xxxx	FL, landmines
118	3/02	"Saw Htaw Saw"	M	58	K	xxxx	FL, porters wounded in crossfire
119	3/02	"Naw Kloh"	F	40	K	xxxx	FL, porters wounded in crossfire
120	3/02	"Saw Luh Kyi"	M	34	K	xxxx	FL, Order 1/99, FR
121	3/02	"Saw Pah Baw"	M	48	K	xxxx	FL, child labour, Order 1/99
122	3/02	"Naw Blu Paw"	F	25	K	xxxx	Landmines
123	3/02	"Saw Mya Aung"	M	46	K	xxxx	Demands, FL, landmines
124	3/02	"Saw Eh Kaw"	M	40	K	xxxx	FL, landmines
125	3/02	"Saw Nay Lay"	M	49	K	xxxx	Arrest
126	3/02	"Saw So Soh"	M	22	K	xxxx	FL, torture, restrictions, extortion,
							demands
127	3/02	"Naw Ka Ya"	F	21	K	xxxx	Extortion, demands, FL, attempted
							rape
128	4/02	"Naw Der Ler"	F	21	K	xxxx	FR, beatings, FL, demands, extortion
129	7/02	"Saw A'Pay Wah"	M	38	K	XXXX	Food scarcity, FL, child labour
130	7/02	"Saw Ree Ko Tha"	M	59	K	XXXX	Arrest
131	11/02	"Saw La Bo"	M	46	K	xxxx	Cash crops, food scarcity, LOR,
122	10/02	"Com V/Com V "	3.7	25	17		SPDC withholding rice
132	12/02	"Saw Y'Gaw Ko"	M	35	K	xxxx	FL, food scarcity, demands
133	12/02	"Saw Bee L'Koh"	M	35	K	xxxx	FL, extortion, demands, food scarcity,
134	12/02	"Saw Heh Kay Law"	M	32	K	rrrr	inflation FL, human shields,
134	12/02	"Saw Hen Kay Law" "Saw Maung"	M	26	K	xxxx	FL, numan snields, FL, child labour, theft
136	12/02	"Saw Ni Ko Win"	M	44	K	xxxx	FL, demands, food scarcity, food
130	12/02	Saw MINO WIII	IVI	++	IX.	XXXX	destruction
137	12/02	"Saw L'Paw Wah"	M	42	K	xxxx	FL, education
138	12/02	"Saw L Taw Wall "Saw Mya Thu"	M	45	K	xxxx	Demands, FL, child labour
150	14/04	Saw wya ma	141	Τ.)	17	ллл	Domanas, 1 L, cima iacoui

139	12/02	"Saw Cho Htwe"	M	30	K	xxxx	FL, food scarcity, cash crops
140	12/02	"Saw Heh Du"	M	32	K	xxxx	FL, child labour
141	12/02	"Saw Kar Wah"	M	35	K	xxxx	FL, beatings
142	12/02	"Saw Sav Neh"	M	40	K	xxxx	Demands, theft

Interviews with IDPs in Than Daung Township

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Nat.	Village	Summary
143	10/00	"Saw Ba Kyu"	M		K	M	FL, labourers, torture
144	11/00	"Saw Kloh Law"	M	45	K	K	FR, extortion, FL, IDPs
145	11/00	"Saw Day Maw"	M	45	K	D	FR, FL, extortion, landmines
146	11/00	"Naw Nay Moo"	F	30	K	P	FR, FL, IDPs, killings
147	3/01	"Saw Eh Law Kaw Ko"	M	53	K	D	Arrest, FL
148	3/01	"Saw Ba Htoo"	M	40	K	L	Arrest, FL, human shields
149	3/01	"Saw Gri Wah"	M	59	K	D	Arrest, FL
150	7/01	"Saw Bway Htoo Lay"	M	24	K	H	Crop destruction, killings
151	1/02	"Saw Kaw Po"	M	30	K	M	IDP situation, food scarcity
152	1/02	"Saw Kyu Heh Law"	M	45	K	K	IDP situation, health, food scarcity, FL, extortion, demands
153	1/02	"Thra Dah Moo"	M	45	K	W	IDP situation, health
154	1/02	"Saw Ti Ki'Daw"	M	55	K	B	Arrest, FL, minesweeping
155	1/02	"Thramu Plo Maw"	F	32	K	T	IDP situation, education, food
133	1/02	Tillamu Tio Waw	1	32	IX	1	scarcity, health
156	1/02	"Saw Hser Nay Soh"	M	30	K	S	IDP situation
157	2/02	"Saw Pee Ghaw"	M	48	K	K	Crop destruction, FL
158	2/02	"Saw Gah Lu"	M	53	K	K	Porters killed in crossfire
159	3/02	"Saw No Poh"	M	49	K	M	FL, labourers, Pyitthu Sit militia,
1.60	2/02	"Com Don Thom?"	M	33	IZ.	V	killings
160	3/02	"Saw Pee Thay" "Saw Ti Mi"	M	30	K K	K	Shootings, killings, arrest, landmines
161	3/02		M	57		K	FR, extortion, FL, demands, torture
162	3/02	"Saw Law Ko"	M F		K	N	IDP situation, FL, health,
163	3/02	"Naw Paw Htoo Htoo"	F	40	K	P	FR, IDP situation, education, food scarcity, killing by GRU
164	3/02	"Naw Thet Wah"	F	58	K	P	FR, looting, extortion, demands, debt, FL, landmines, food destruction
165	3/02	"Saw Hser Paw"	M	25	K	G	Demands, torture, killings, IDP situation, FL, landmines, extortion, health
166	3/02	"Saw Tha Way"	M	20	K	K	Extortion, demands, shootings by GRU, FR
167	3/02	"Saw Pweh T'Kee"	M	33	K	K	Arrest, shootings, killings, landmines
168	3/02	"Saw Htay Moo"	M	52	K	M	Demands, food scarcity, arrest, torture
169	3/02	"Saw Sa Min"	M	35	K	P	FR, FL, extortion, demands
170	3/02	"Saw Doh Dee"	M	40	K	M	Food scarcity, arrest, FL, conditions in prisons
171	3/02	"Naw Paw Ghee"	F	45	K	K	Landmines
172	3/02	"Saw Eh T'Thee"	M	12	K	K	Food scarcity, landmines, killing
173	3/02	"Saw Sha Lu"	M	26	K	K	Landmines, killing
174	3/02	"Saw Soe Tint"	M	60	K	P	FR, looting, destruction of property, food scarcity
175	3/02	"Saw Po Htun"	M	78	K	P	FR, landmines, FL, health, extortion, demands
177	3/02	"Saw Ku Lay Thaw"	M	42	K	P	FL, minesweeping, FR
176	3/02						1 2, mmes weeping, 1 10

							ı
178	3/02	"Saw Tha Htwe"	M	47	K	P	LOR, FR, looting, relocation sites, FL
179	3/02	"Naw Da"	F	43	K	K	FR, FL, relocation sites, LOR
180	3/02	"Saw Htoo Klih"	M	48	K	K	FL, arrest, beatings, LOR
181	3/02	"Saw Noh Lee"	M	45	K	K	Extortion, FL, IDP situation
182	3/02	"Saw K'Paw Heh"	M	53	K	K	IDP situation
183	4/02	"Saw Yaw"	M	25	K	P	FL, extortion
184	4/02	"Saw Thu Ka Ma"	M	24	K	D	Landmines, village destruction, IDP
							situation
185	10/02	"Saw Ya Ya Kee"	M	47	K	L	Village destruction, arrest, torture,
							killings, rape
186	10/02	"Saw Htoo Wee"	M	52	K	L	Rape, FL
187	11/02	"Saw Ler Kee"	M	35	K	P	LOR, SPDC withholding rice, IDP
							situation
188	11/02	"Saw A'La Chit"	M	45	K	K	SPDC, IDP situation
189	11/02	"Naw Ta Ta"	F	26	K	D	IDP situation, food scarcity
190	11/02	"Saw Khaw Myo"	M	53	K	D	Arrest, conditions in cells
191	11/02	"Saw Pee Bee"	M	35	K	P	FR, landmines, arrest, beatings
192	12/02	"Saw Pa Say Lah"	M	48	K	L	FL, food scarcity, cash crops

Interviews with Convict Porters

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Nat.	St/ Div.	Summary
193	2/02	"Ko Khin Thein"	M	20	В	Mandalay	treatment of convict porters, torture,
							FL, roads
194	2/02	"Zaw Aung"	M	30	L	Kachin	treatment of convict porters, torture,
							FL, roads
195	2/02	"U Maung Shwe"	M	28	В	Mandalay	treatment of convict porters, torture,
		_				-	FL, roads

Interviews with Karen Relief Workers

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Nat.	Twp.	Summary
196	8/03	"Saw Thaw Kee"	M	30	K	T	Health, IDPs, landmines, SPDC, food,
							education
197	8/03	"Saw Play Kaw"	M	31	K		General situation in Toungoo District,
		-					landmines, GRU, SPDC, FL,
							extortion, food, education

Appendix B: SPDC Military Units Operating In Toungoo District, 2000-2004

Some of the SPDC military units are stationed in Toungoo District on a permanent basis, but many of them rotate in and out of the district on a four-monthly basis. A battalion may be stationed in Toungoo District one month, only to be relocated to Nyaunglebin District, for example, the next. The battalions listed here have been identified by villagers and by KNU and other sources to have been active within Toungoo District from 2000 to 2004, during the period over which this report is based. Only four battalions from LID #55 are listed because only one Tactical Operations Command was assigned to the District.

Southern Regional Command

1.	IB #26	10. IB #75
2.	IB #30	11. IB #92
3.	IB #35	12. IB #124
4.	IB #39	13. IB #264
5.	IB #48	14. IB #349
6.	IB #53	15. LIB #351
7.	IB #59	16. LIB #439
8.	IB #60	17. LIB #589
9.	IB #73	18. LIB #599

Western Regional Command

1.	IB #20	6.	LIB #344
2.	IB #34	7.	LIB #538
3.	IB #232	8.	LIB #539
4.	IB #233	9.	LIB #540
5.	IB #234	10.	LIB #550

Light Infantry Division #55

1. IB #94	3. LIB #508
2. LIB #117	4. LIB #511

Dam Byan Byaut Kya Units

- 1. Wei Za (Supernatural Being)
- 2. Ba La (Strength)
- 3. Kya Kyi (Big Tiger)
- 4. *Moe Kyo* (Lightning)
- 5. *Mone Dtine* (Storm)
- 6. Galone (Garuda)
- 7. *Mone Thon* (Monsoon)

Appendix C: English-language Translations of SPDC Order Documents

The Order Documents shown in this appendix, as well as those reproduced throughout the body of this report may also be found published in previous KHRG reports, namely: "Forced Labour Since the Ban: A Compendium of SPDC Order Documents Demanding Forced Labour Since November 2000" (KHRG #2002-01, 8/2/2002) and "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003). All orders shown in this appendix are in chronological order of the dates that they were issued. Orders 1 through 14 may be found reproduced within the body of the report. Appendix D shows copies of the original Burmese-language orders of these, and those orders reproduced elsewhere in this report.

All attempts have been made to accurately reproduce the visual page layout of each order, and underlining, etc. are as they appear in the order. "Stamp:" gives the translation of the rubber-stamped unit identifier affixed to many of the orders, while "[Sd.]" denotes the usually illegible signature of the issuing official. The language of many of the orders sounds awkward because Burmese grammar is very different from English; for example, the ordering of phrases within a sentence is almost opposite, sentences are often very long and convoluted, and personal subject and object pronouns are often omitted in Burmese. We have translated the words and expressions as directly as possible, though we have sometimes had to make minor changes in the sequence of the words for the wording to make sense and to have the exact same meaning in English. Moreover, many SPDC Army officers and Non-Commissioned Officers are semi-illiterate so they write with terrible grammar and frequent mistakes, and misspell place names and people's names. Where necessary, we have added notes in italics in square brackets for clarification, but all other text is as it appears in the orders. All text not in square brackets is in the text of the order document itself.

Like elsewhere in this report, in order to protect the people and their villages against retaliation, we have censored the names of people, villages, Army camps, Army officers, and other details that could be used to track the villages involved. These have been replaced by 'xxxx', 'yyyy', 'aaaa', etc. We have generally used 'xx' for numerals and general information, 'xxxx', 'yyyy', 'zzzz', 'wwww', etc. for place names, and 'aaaa', 'bbbb', 'cccc', etc. for people's names. When an order refers to several people or places, we have assigned each person and place a specific string ('xxxx', 'bbbb', etc.) to keep the references consistent and avoid confusion.

Stamp:

Frontline #289 Infantry Battalion Letter No. 1 Date: 10-11-00 Column *x* Headquarters

Date: 10-11-00

To:
U aaaa
xxxx Village

Subject: <u>Calling loh ah pay</u>

There is work at our IB #289 [camp], so a strength of 10 people from xxxx village must come to the xxxx [village] square on the night of 11-11-00 to gather and prepare. Chairperson U aaaa must come without fail to meet with the Column Commander on 10-11-00 in the evening, asking for help, you are informed.

[Sd.]
Column Commander
IB #289
Mobile Column

[Underlined in red ink:]

If the Chairperson is not there, any ten-houses leader or one [VPDC] member come without fail to meet

[On the back of the above order the village head has written a list of 7 names with numbered spaces for 3 more, presumably the villagers who are going to have to go for the forced labour. The 'member' referred to in the note at the bottom means a member of the village council under the village Chairperson; villages are also divided into units of ten houses, each led by a 'ten-house leader'. This order was also published as Order #8 in "Forced Labour Since the Ban: A Compendium of SPDC Order Documents Demanding Forced Labour Since November 2000" (KHRG #2002-01, 8/2/2002).]

Order #16

Name: U aaaa and 5 [sic: 4] companions

Age: 30 years Father's name: Saw *bbbb*

Address: Villagers of xxxx [village]

This [group] totalling 5 people have been doing duty as Servants with our Army starting from 13-11-2000 through to 16-11-2000. [They] Have fully completed their duty, so have been released to go back, and [they] are recommended.

[Sd.] (for) Battalion Commander

[Group] Members (5) people

[This is a pass given to a group of 5 villagers to allow them to return to their village after they have completed 4 days of forced labour. Without such a pass, they would have a good chance of being arrested and detained along the way for being outside their village, or grabbed for forced labour along the way by another Army unit. This order was also published as Order #14 in "Forced Labour Since the Ban: A Compendium of SPDC Order Documents Demanding Forced Labour Since November 2000" (KHRG #2002-01, 8/2/2002).]

Stamp:

To:

Village Peace and Development Council Than Daung township Bawgali Gyi tract Chairperson/Secretary xxxx [village] Date: 1-1-02

Subject: The matter of sending loh ah pay

In accordance with the order of the Deputy Battalion Commander from Bawgali Gyi Army Camp [given] at 5 o'clock this evening, send without fail 3 loh ah pay people from xxxx village who must follow the bulldozer on 2-1-02 at 7 o'clock in the morning, you are informed.

[Sd.]

<u>Stamp:</u> (for) Chairperson Village Peace and Development Council Bawgali Gyi tract - Than Daung township

['Follow the bulldozer' means to ride along on the bulldozer to deter the KNLA from laying landmines to destroy it. This order was also published as Order #2 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

Order #18

Stamp: Date: 24-1-02

Village Peace and Development Council
Than Daung township
Bawgali Gyi tract
To:

Chairperson/Secretary

xxxx [village]

The servant from xxxx village who was following the bulldozer is carrying a wounded person and has arrived at Bawgali Gyi village. Xxxx village hired this servant and it has not yet been one full month. As it has not been a full one month, [we] have to still keep [him]. Therefore, meet with the Bawgali Gyi Army camp in-charge, [we] want [you] to come on 25-1-02.

[Sd.]

<u>Stamp:</u> (for) Chairperson

Village Peace and Development Council

Bawgali Gyi tract, Than Daung township

[This village hired an itinerant labourer to take their place doing one full month of forced labour on construction work; as the month is not yet finished but the person is no longer able to continue, the village head will likely be ordered to send a replacement. This order was also published as Order #18 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

Stamp:

To:

Village Peace and Development Council Than Daung township Bawgali Gyi tract Chairperson *xxxx* [village]

Subject: The matter of cutting posts and bamboo sections

Elder, [we] need to discuss with you regarding the above subject, so Chairperson and

Secretary come to this office (Bawgali Gyi VPDC office), you are informed.

Date: 1-2-2002

Time: 9 o'clock in the morning

[Sd.] 30-1-2002
<u>Stamp:</u> Chairperson
Village Peace and Development Council
Bawgali Gyi tract, Than Daung township

[This order was also published as Order #153 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

Order #20

Stamp:

To:

Village Peace and Development Council
Than Daung township
Bawgali Gyi tract

Chairperson *xxxx* [village]

Subject: The matter of wood posts and bamboo sections

Regarding the above subject, come to the VPDC office on 1-2-2002, you are informed.

Time: Morning 9 o'clock

[Sd.] 31-1-2002
<u>Stamp:</u> Chairperson
Village Peace and Development Council
Bawgali Gyi tract, Than Daung township

[This order was also published as Order #154 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

<u>Stamp:</u>	To:	Date: 11-3-2002
Village Peace and Development Council	Chairperson/Secretary	
Than Daung township	<u>aaaa</u> village	
Bawgali Gyi tract		

Subject: The matter of coming to give servant hiring fees for the month of 3/2002 and the remainder of servant hiring fees for 11/2001

Regarding the above subject, the villages from Bawgali Gyi village tract have hired a total of 10 people as servant this month of 3/2002. Collect and send [the money] as we allocated for all the villages below and also come without fail to send the remaining money which is owed to pay for the previous month to arrive at the same time (<u>3-2002</u>), you are informed.

1. 2.	xxxx - 4 people (4 x 15,000) yyyy - 2 people (2 x 15,000) 11/2001 the remaining money from the month before	= 60,000 Kyat = 30,000 Kyat = 10,000 "
	Total	= 40,000 Kyat
3.	zzzz - 1 person (1 x 15,000) 11/2001 the remaining money from the month before Total	= 15,000 Kyat = 4,000 " = 19,000 Kyat
4.	wwww - 1 person (1 x15,000) 11/2001 the remaining money from the month before Total	= 15,000 Kyat = No = 15,000 Kyat
5.	vvvv - 1 person (1 x 15,000) 11/2001 the remaining money from the month before Total	= 15,000 Kyat = No " = 15,000 Kyat
6.	<i>uuuu</i> - 1 people (1 x 15,000) 11/2001 the remaining money from the month before Total	= 15,000 Kyat = <u>No "</u> = 15,000 Kyat "

[Sd.] 10-3-2002
<u>Stamp:</u> Chairperson
Village Peace and Development Council
Bawgali Gyi tract, Than Daung township

[On the back, this order is addressed "To: Chairperson/Secretary, xxxx village." These lists are sent to the villages in the area every month letting them know how much money they owe in servant fees, both for the current month and in arrears. KHRG had received many copies of this letter over the past several years and they have appeared in several previous orders reports. This order was also published as Order #274 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

Receipt of received servant fees.

This month _______ for servant fees, from _______ xxxx ____ village, [we] received truly ________ 40,000 Kyat of money exactly from the person ________ who came to hand over the money.

Remaining money to pay for this month is ________ Kyat.

[Sd.] bbbb
Treasurer's Signature

[These receipts are all typewritten with the information filled-in in the blanks. KHRG has received several copies of these receipts. They are issued each month to villages in the area after the village pays what it owes in servant fees. Note the writer made a mistake with the second date in the blank. This order was also published as Order #267 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

<u>Order #23</u>

Stamp:

#xx Strategic Operations Command Group Ta Pa Ka [Southern Command Headquarters]

> Mobile #x Strategic Operations Command Group Bawgali Gyi Letter No: xxxx / x / Oo x Date: Year 2002, March 17th

To:

Chairperson xxxx village

Subject: Specifying the prohibited area

When [the villagers from] the villages of xxxx, yyyy, zzzz, wwww go to uuuu village, the car road must be used and the insurgents should not enter uuuu by the path the people travel, it will be closed with landmines starting on March 18th 2002 at 6 o'clock in the evening, you are informed.

[Sd.]
(for) Temporary Strategic Operations Commander

[On the back, this order is addressed "To: Chairperson, xxxx village, xxxx / x / Oo x, 17-3-2002. Stamp: #x Strategic Operations Command Group, Southern Command Headquarters." This typewritten order was distributed to several villages in the area. This order was also published as Order #348 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

<u>Stamp:</u> To: Date: 6-4-02

Village Peace and Development Council
Than Daung township
Bawgali Gyi tract

Chairperson *xxxx* [village]

Subject: The matter of sending *loh ah pay* to Bawgali Gyi Army Camp.

In accordance with the order letter of 6-4-02 from the #3 Strategic Operations Command at Bawgali Gyi Army Camp, 100 people must gather for *loh ah pay* at Bawgali Gyi. In accordance with the ratio of houses for the villages in the tract, the directive allocates 20 *loh ah pay* people for xxxx village. Therefore, send the *loh ah pay* people required to Bawgali Gyi village on 9-4-02 at 7 o'clock on Monday [sic: Tuesday] morning, you are informed.

[Sd.]
(for) Chairperson
Village Peace and Development Council
Bawgali Gyi tract- Than Daung township

[The Army has sent a demand for 100 forced labourers from this village tract, and the village tract authorities have to divide the responsibility among the villages based on the number of houses in each village. This village has been assigned to provide 20 of the 100 people. This order was also published as Order #58 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

Order #25

To: Stamp: Date: 15-4-2002

Chairperson #xx Strategic Operations Command Group xxxx village Southern Command Headquarters

Subject: The matter of sending *myaw* posts

Regarding the above subject, send without fail 100 myaw posts 10 inches in circumference, 10 taung [cubits; 460 cms. / 15 feet] in length from xxxx village. It must arrive at the Army Camp on April 17th, 2002, you are informed.

[Sd.]

['Myaw' are bamboo roof support poles, which hold up the thatch roofing shingles. This order was also published as Order #165 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

Stamp: Date: 6-5-02

Village Peace and Development Council
Than Daung township
Bawgali Gyi tract To:

Chairperson xxxx [village]

Subject: The matter of cutting bushes on the Bawgali - Yay Tho Gyi vehicle road, on left and right

sides of the road.

Regarding the above subject, the Operations Commander at Bawgali Police Camp called a meeting on 6-5-02 at 10:30 hours and gave an order to cut the left and right sides of the Bawgali Gyi - Yay Tho Gyi road. [People] From all the villages will gather and carry it out on 8-5-02, Monday [sic: Wednesday], so the Elder's village knows and will carry [it] out, you are informed.

[Sd.]

<u>Stamp:</u> (for) Chairperson

Village Peace and Development Council

Bawgali Gyi tract- Than Daung township

[This order was also published as Order #65 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

Order #27

[*To:*] 2-8-2002

Chairperson *xxxx* village

Chairperson, I am writing a letter. [I] Sent a letter and 5 viss [8 kgs. / 18 lbs.] of pork. 1 viss is 1,200 Kyat and [I] want you to send this 6,000 Kyat of money with the messenger now. It is not a sick pig. The Army bought and killed it. If possible [I] want [you] to help and carry it out.

With respect.

[Sd.]
Major aaaa
Frontline #53
xxxx

[The Army officer sent this letter along with the pork for which he dictated his own price. The villagers had to pay for the pork whether they wanted to eat it or not. The market price for one viss (1.6 kgs. / 3.6 lbs.) of pork in Toungoo District at the time that this order was issued was 1000 Kyat, not the 1,200 Kyat that this Major has dictated. This order was also published as Order #307 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

To: Date: 6-11-02

Chairperson

I am writing a letter.
To help for the curry,
2 ducks
1 chicken
50 pieces *Kyeh Ni*2 packs of *London*Send [them] with the messenger now.

[Sd.] Sergeant aaaa

[On the back, this order is addressed: "To: Chairperson, xxxx village." 'Kyeh Ni' is a brand of cheroot and 'London' is a brand of cigarettes. This order was also published as Order #321 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

Order #29

22130 hours

To:

Big Chairperson, I am writing [you] a letter and sending it. [You] must help and carry out [sending us] any curry with the person who brings the letter now.

Asking for help.

We are asking for help, because [we are] facing a problem.

With respect,

[Sd.]
aaaa
Regional Mobile
Special Unit

[On the back, this order is addressed "To: Big Chairperson, xxxx [village]". 'Special Unit' means that this order was probably issued by one of the Guerrilla Retaliation Units. This order was also published as Order #333 in "SPDC and DKBA Orders to Villages: Set 2003-A; Papun, Pa'an, Thaton, Nyaunglebin, Toungoo, and Dooplaya Districts" (KHRG #2003-01, 22/8/2003).]

"The SPDC's plans are to oppress our nationality [the Karen ethnic group]. All of our belongings or money becomes theirs. We have to feed them anything they demand. We have to give it to them. We have to carry loads for them. At the moment they are holding the guns and they are oppressing the villagers. If we look at their plans, we see that it is not a government's planning; it is [the plan of] beggars and thieves." - a 50 year old villager from Tantabin Township, Toungoo District

The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) military junta's campaign to gain absolute control over the hills of Toungoo District continues in a slow war of attrition waged against the civilian population. Villagers living in SPDC controlled areas are exploited as a ready source of forced labour portering loads and acting as servants for the military, in addition to watching their life savings disappear into the pockets of corrupt SPDC officers through the endless array of fees and extortion money exacted from them. These villagers are faced with the difficult decision of remaining to languish under the control of the SPDC or to join the several thousand others who live as internally displaced persons hiding in the jungle where they are desperately short of food, shelter, and security. Those who have adopted this life must literally run for their lives at the sound of any approaching SPDC Army patrols who hunt them down.

With an uncertain future and starvation hovering ominously over their heads, the villagers and the internally displaced alike are running short on options as the situation facing them grows increasingly more desperate.



The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) was founded in 1992 and documents the situation of villagers and townspeople in rural Burma through their direct testimonies, supported by photographic and other evidence. KHRG operates completely independently and is not affiliated with any political or other organisation. Examples of our work can be seen on the World Wide Web at www.khrg.org. KHRG can be contacted at khrg.org.