

DOOPLAYA UNDER THE SPDC

Further Developments in the SPDC Occupation of South-Central Karen State

An Independent Report by the Karen Human Rights Group
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In early 1997, the State Law & Order Restoration Council (SLORC) military junta ruling Burma mounted a major offensive against the Karen National Union (KNU) and succeeded in capturing and occupying most of the remainder of Dooplaya District in central Karen State. Since that time the SLORC has changed its name to the State Peace & Development Council (SPDC), but its occupation troops have continued to strengthen their control over the rural Karen villagers who live in the region. Almost all of the people in the region are Karen, though there are minorities of ethnic Mon, Thai, and Indian-Muslim people in parts of central and western Dooplaya. This report provides an update on the current situation for villagers in Dooplaya's farming communities under the SPDC occupation. Some of the main issues covered are general human rights abuses against the villagers, which include arbitrary killings, torture, detention, rape, forced labour, forced relocations, looting and extortion; the special plight of the Dta La Ku, a Karen religious minority who have been targeted for persecution by armies on all sides of the conflict but who are almost completely ignored by the outside world; the effects on villagers of the changing military-political situation in the region, including the activities of the Karen Peace Army (KPA) and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), rival armies both allied with the SPDC; and the effects of the ongoing struggle between the SPDC and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), both of which are increasingly using landmines in the area. Differences and similarities are examined between the situation in Dooplaya's central plain, the mountainous eastern 'hump' which projects into Thailand, and the district's far south.

*This report provides an update to the June 1998 KHRG report "**Strengthening the Grip on Dooplaya**" (KHRG #98-05, 10/6/98). For further background on the 1997 offensive in Dooplaya and its immediate aftermath, see the previously released reports "**Refugees from the SLORC Occupation**" (KHRG #97-07, 25/5/97) and "**Clampdown in Southern Dooplaya**" (KHRG #97-11, 18/11/97).*

*This report is divided into several parts: immediately following this introduction is a description and analysis of the current situation in Dooplaya supported by quotes from local villagers, internally displaced people and refugees, and following that are the full texts of ten interviews selected from among those conducted by KHRG in the region between April and October 1998, field reports selected from among those submitted by KHRG human rights monitors, and seven examples of SPDC written orders which were sent to villages in Dooplaya between December 1997 and July 1998. Interviews #11-16 are quoted in the analysis section but are not included in full for reasons of brevity. All names of those interviewed have been changed and some details omitted where necessary to protect people. False names are shown in quotes, while all other names are real. Note that many places throughout Dooplaya are known by more than one name; for example, the central village of Saw Hta is known as Azin in Burmese, and Th'Waw Thaw in eastern Dooplaya is Sakanthit in Burmese. Villagers often use the names interchangeably. All numeric dates in the report are in **dd/mm/yy** format.*

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Abbreviations

SPDC	State Peace & Development Council, military junta ruling Burma
SLORC 1997	State Law & Order Restoration Council, former name of the SPDC until Nov. 1997
KNU	Karen National Union, main Karen opposition group
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army, army of the KNU
DKBA	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, Karen group allied with SLORC/SPDC
KPA	Karen Peace Army, known as “Nyein Chan Yay A’Pway”, or “Peace Force”, in Burmese; set up in Dooplaya in 1997 after the SLORC occupation
Ko Per Baw	“Yellow headbands”; name used by villagers to refer to DKBA
Ko Per Lah	“Green headbands”; name occasionally used to refer to KNLA
T’Bee Met	“Closed-eyes”; name used by DKBA to refer to KNU/KNLA
Nga pway	“Ringworm”; derogatory SLORC/SPDC name for Karen soldiers
IB	Infantry Battalion (SLORC/SPDC), usually about 500 soldiers fighting strength
LIB	Light Infantry Battalion (SLORC/SPDC), usually about 500 soldiers fighting strength
LID	Light Infantry Division (SLORC/SPDC); one Division consists of 10 LIB battalions
Viss	Unit of weight measure; one viss is 1.6 kilograms or 3.5 pounds
Kyat rate	Burmese currency; US\$1=6 Kyat at official rate, 300+ Kyat at current market rate
Baht	Thai currency; US\$1 = approximately 38 Baht at time of printing

The Current Situation in Dooplaya

Dooplaya District covers much of the southern half of Karen State, from the Myawaddy - Kyone Doh - Pa'an motor road in the north to the Three Pagodas Pass area 160 kilometres (100 miles) further south. In early 1997 the SLORC regime mounted a major military operation and successfully occupied almost all of this area, though the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is still very active in guerrilla operations. While the SLORC/SPDC has gradually increased its repression to establish control over the area, they have also formed and employed a Karen proxy army called the Karen Peace Army (KPA) under Thu Mu Heh, a former KNLA officer who defected in 1997. In Burmese the KPA is known as the 'Nyein Chan Yay A'Pway', which literally translates as 'Peace Force'. The SPDC removed the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) from most of the region and made a show of giving 'authority' over the area to the KPA.

The Dta La Ku

“(W)e went to the [SPDC] Operations Commander and asked if he could excuse us from portering. He agreed and gave us a letter of permission to be excused. After only six days, the Burmese soldiers ordered the Dta La Ku villagers to be porters again, and they told us that if the Dta La Ku people don’t do as they require then all Dta La Ku people must leave their country.” - “Pa Bway Htoo” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder on the Burma-Thai border (Interview #6, 9/98)

The KPA set out to gather recruits by promising villagers that the families of those who joined would be exempted from forced labour for the SPDC, and by trying to force all able-bodied men of the Dta La Ku people to join. The Dta La Ku are a religious minority among the Karen, numbering some 5,000 people, who live mainly in southern Dooplaya District. They have been persecuted and pressured to join the struggle by both the SLORC/SPDC and the KNLA, even though taking part in an armed struggle or supporting one goes directly against their strict religion and lifestyle.

“There are two sides to our religion. One is Ter, which are the traditional practices of our religion, and the other is Taw, which is the word of our God. We must follow both our traditional practices and the words of our God. We must not become soldiers or aid in an armed struggle. However, when we were living among the people there we had to do some military work for them. We knew that if we lived among them for a long time we would have to violate our religious requirements. If we keep living among those people our traditional life will disappear. Even now it is deteriorating.” - “Maw Hla Shwe” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder from Ywa Thay village, Kawkareik township (Interview #14, 9/98)

For further background on the KPA and the pressure on the Dta La Ku, see the report *“Strengthening the Grip on Dooplaya”* (KHRG #98-05, 10/6/98). When this report was published in mid-1998, most of the Dta La Ku refugees in Thailand had returned to their villages in Burma, but they were under increasing pressure to join the KPA and they had

sent a delegation to request SPDC military authorities for permission to gather and live together in one small area near the Thai border, where they would be free of forced labour and KPA pressure and in return would not take any part in the struggle. Since that time, the local SPDC Tactical Commander granted them the permission they desired. About 2,000 Dta La Ku villagers gathered in the Kwih Lat Der / Taung Ka Lay area near the Thai border hoping to be able to farm and practice their beliefs freely without forced labour and military pressure.

Now the KPA is no longer demanding that all Dta La Ku men join the army, though they are still trying to attract recruits from among both Dta La Ku and non-Dta La Ku villagers [see below under 'The KPA and the DKBA']. However, over the past two months the SPDC military has reneged on its promise and has begun placing ever-increasing demands on the Dta La Ku villagers to provide porters and other forced labourers. Most of the forced labour demands are being made by troops from Light Infantry Division #44, particularly Light Infantry Battalion #343. The latest demand is that Kwih Lat Der and some other villages each provide 4 porters at all times, rotating the people every 5 days, or pay 80,000 Kyats per month. 80,000 Kyats is a huge sum of money for rural villagers. Even Kwih Lat Der, a large village which now has 150 households, could only come up with 40,000 Kyats the first month, so they negotiated a deal whereby they have to send 2 of the 4 people demanded and pay 40,000 Kyats. SPDC patrols coming through Kwih Lat Der area also demand additional porters every day and charge 100 Thai Baht per day as a fine for anyone who cannot go.

“Now we have been under the control of the Burmese soldiers for two years, so I know all about the Burmese soldiers. The longer we live under the control of the Burmese soldiers the poorer we become. We don’t have time to work on our farms. They always demand that we work for them, even though no KNU people come to our village. ... We went to the [SPDC] commander and asked if the Dta La Ku people could be exempted from going as porters. They agreed once. Then we asked for that chance again but they never allowed it again, so now the Dta La Ku people must carry things as porters. Recently they demanded four Dta La Ku people or 80,000 Kyats from Kwih Lat Der area. [The village was ordered to send 4 people at all times on a rotating basis, or pay 80,000 Kyats per month to be exempted.] We begged them to be left to do our own work instead, so then they said they would accept two people and 40,000 Kyats.” - “Saw Meh Doh” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder from Kwih Lat Der village, southern Dooplaya (Interview #7, 9/98)

Dta La Ku village elders in the Kwih Lat Der area have repeatedly approached local SPDC military commanders, asking for the release of porters and protesting that portering and soldiering go directly against Dta La Ku religious beliefs. In response, they have only been scolded by the SPDC officers for being “irritants and troublemakers”, and told that if the Dta La Ku are not willing to support the Army with their labour then they are to be driven out of Burma. This word has also been sent out through the soldiers, as returning Dta La Ku porters have said they were frightened when they heard the same thing from SPDC troops.

“(W)hen we asked the second time for the Dta La Ku people to be excused from portering, the Burmese soldiers said that the Dta La Ku people must not live in Burma. ... We begged them to excuse us from carrying their military supplies because it violates our religious rules. But in response they told us that we Dta La Ku people are irritants so we cannot stay in their country.” - “Saw Meh Doh” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder from Kwih Lat Der village, southern Dooplaya (Interview #7, 9/98)

Further into SPDC territory and away from the border with Thailand, the 40 Dta La Ku families of Meh T’La village are being forced to provide 2 porters at all times on a 5-day rotation to carry rice and ammunition to Kyaikdon for the SPDC, and 100 people at a time also have to do forced labour building a security fence several kilometres long along the local motor road. Villagers are not allowed to go to their fields to tend their crops without a pass, and cannot stay in their field huts for more than 2 consecutive nights. In August a 20-year-old man named Maw Lu Po from the village was executed by SPDC troops for being caught in possession of medicine. He was bringing injection sets for the villagers, who have no doctor, but the troops accused him of possessing medicine to give to KNLA units. The village was also forced to move to another site by the SPDC, but was then ordered by the local KNLA unit to move back or be shelled with mortars. The villagers don’t dare go back against SPDC orders, and many see no option but to flee. At the same time villagers, including Dta La Ku, in Kru Tu Kee have been forced to provide 100 baskets of seed paddy, plant a crop and tend it for SPDC troops in the area. Dta La Ku villagers from Ywa Thay village in western Dooplaya claim that they have also been facing an increase of forced labour as porters for the SPDC, the KPA and remnants of DKBA (who still have troops in the far west and far east of Dooplaya), as well as forced labour building and maintaining an SPDC camp, pathways, and planting and tending a rice crop for the local SPDC Battalions. One village elder from this area stated that they could survive under the SPDC for the first year of the occupation, but by the end of the second year “everything is gone” because of all their demands for food and forced labour; in order to tend their crops and do other work, villagers pay money to avoid forced labour whenever possible, and to do this they must progressively sell off their livestock and valuables until nothing is left and they must go for forced labour or flee.

Dta La Ku villagers from Kwih Kler village in central Dooplaya report that they are also being used as SPDC porters and that the only way to escape this work is to pay money, but they have no money left. In the months before rainy season (up to June 1998) they were also forced to cut down many of their coconut trees to clear a path for a new road route. Construction on this road (probably a more direct route to replace the existing Azin - Kwih Kler - Lay Po Hta road) has not yet begun, but could begin in November or December 1998, and would most likely involve heavy use of forced labour from villagers in the Kwih Kler and Azin (Saw Hta) areas. SPDC officers have already ordered all Dta La Ku villagers who have already left Kwih Kler to return or have their homes and fields confiscated by the Army, but some of those who have left say they won’t go back anyway because they can no longer take the burden of forced labour.

As a result of all of the above, over 900 Dta La Ku villagers crossed the border to become refugees in Thailand in August and September 1998, and in late September elders from

Dta La Ku villages in Dooplaya District claimed that all of those who had gathered to live in the Kwih Lat Der / Taung Ka Lay area, totalling close to 2,000 more, were preparing to cross the border the moment the pressure intensified further. At the time of printing, it appears that some of these have already crossed but most still remain just on the Burma side of the border ready to flee. The Dta La Ku refugees already in Thailand are staying around the Thai Dta La Ku village of Lay Taw Ko. The Dta La Ku refugees are not willing to go to the existing Karen refugee camp at Noh Po, because they fear that among the 10,000 refugees already at Noh Po they would have no chance to maintain their religion and lifestyle. Furthermore, Thai officials have told them not to go to Noh Po because Noh Po is a strictly closed camp and the Thai officials fear that the Dta La Ku would always be slipping in and out in order to attend religious events at their religious centres. Should another 1,000-2,000 Dta La Ku refugees arrive in Thailand, how they will be received remains uncertain.

“I don’t know what to do. The villagers are going to flee and come here again. We are not sure whether the Thai soldiers will allow them to come here or not, but I’m sure myself that the Thai soldiers will not allow them to stay. I want to know what we can do to stop the Thai soldiers from coming here to block their arrival.” - “Pa Bway Htoo” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder on the Burma-Thai border (Interview #6, 9/98)

Ironically, although they are in Thailand many of the men return back across the border once per month to do a shift of forced labour as porters for SPDC troops. This is because when they fled villages like Kwih Kler to gather around Kwih Lat Der the SPDC noted down all the family registrations and use these to demand one person from each family for forced labour each month. If the villagers, including those already in Thailand but still on the SPDC list, do not return for their shift then the SPDC troops force the Kwih Lat Der village elders to pay 300 Kyat for each missing person. Rather than bring suffering on the elders, even the Dta La Ku refugees already in Thailand either send 300 Kyats each month or go for a shift of portering.

The KPA and the DKBA

“Thu Mu Heh’s army, the KPA, is in Klih but he is not there. Klih is below Kyaikdon [downstream along the Hong Thayaw river] near Kwih Kalay. They have nearly 2,000 soldiers around, but I don’t know exactly how many [other observers estimate only 200-300]. Now they have become the enemy of the KNU. ... If a villager becomes a KPA soldier his family does not have to do forced labour. Some villagers become KPA soldiers. Some of those who joined have remained as KPA soldiers, but most of them have already quit. ... (T)hey cause problems for the villagers by asking for taxes whenever the Burmese soldiers ask for taxes, and they also force people to work whenever the Burmese soldiers force people to work. The villagers say that the KPA are nice to them about one-third of the time. ... (T)he KPA commander ordered each village headman to give them some villagers to become soldiers. The village headmen don’t dare to violate orders so they must ask the villagers to go and become KPA

soldiers. Two or three people from each village have to become KPA soldiers.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

In late 1997 the SPDC made a big show of handing ‘authority’ over all of central and southern Dooplaya to Thu Mu Heh and the KPA. In the process they ejected the DKBA from all of Dooplaya except the western strip and the ‘hump’ of eastern Dooplaya which projects into Thailand. The DKBA has its roots further north in Pa’an and Thaton districts, and had struggled slowly for 3 years with the help of the SLORC/SPDC to establish a small presence in Dooplaya before this occurred, only to find many of their troops sent back to Pa’an district by the SPDC.

In reality, the SPDC retains complete authority in central and southern Dooplaya and the KPA only exists as a front to present to the villagers and the outside world. Even in this role the KPA has essentially failed. The KPA has been largely unsuccessful in its recruitment drive, and its membership still numbers no more than about 200-300 according to most reports from Dooplaya. The KPA has alienated the villagers by working exclusively with and under the protection of the SPDC. Very few villagers joined under the promise of exempting their families from forced labour, so in many villages the KPA has simply demanded 2 or 3 recruits. Village elders must comply or face punishment by the SPDC. However, many of those who initially joined the KPA have since run away, according to villagers from Dooplaya. Being villagers and not former soldiers, they were not used to army regimentation, and many only joined on the understanding that they would be posted in their home villages. When their brief training ended and they were ordered to other parts of the district, some of them fled back home. The KPA is now less prevalent along some parts of the border with Thailand, and it seems the SPDC has withdrawn them from certain areas. Some SPDC units still have two or three of them attached to the unit to do errands and villagers in central and southern Dooplaya frequently see them together with SPDC columns, but the KPA has for the time being been marginalised as an effective force. Most of those not on the move with SPDC columns stay at their base at Klih, 10-15 kilometres north of Kyaikdon. Thu Mu Heh, who formed and commands the KPA, is reportedly staying in the western Dooplaya garrison town of Kya In Seik Gyi, most likely so that he can remain in close contact with the SPDC command and because he would be too vulnerable to assassination by the KNLA if he stayed among his troops. The KNLA has already tried to assassinate him on more than one occasion since 1997, coming close to succeeding but only managing to kill some of his relatives in the process.

As of September 1998 the SPDC was reportedly still paying salaries to KPA members on the order of 1,000 Kyats per month for soldiers and 1,500 for higher officers. Similar salaries were paid to those who joined the DKBA in the first 2 years of its existence, but then they were cut off. The SPDC may still be paying salaries to KPA members in an attempt to attract more recruits, but if so then it is likely that these salaries will be cut off soon. Like the DKBA, the KPA receives its food and ammunition supplies from the SPDC. Over the past 2 years the SPDC has severely cut back such supplies to the DKBA, even stating that they may cut off food supplies to the DKBA headquarters at Myaing Gyi Ngu at the end of 1998. The KPA may also face similar cutbacks, but they

are not as well established as the DKBA and therefore may not be able to survive as an army if this happens.

The DKBA is still present in small numbers in western and southwestern Dooplaya, around the heavily SPDC-controlled ‘white areas’ of Mon State. They also occupy the eastern ‘hump’ of Dooplaya which projects into Thailand and the narrow strip along the Moei River from the ‘hump’ north to the border town of Myawaddy. Their main base is at Wah Lay, and they also have soldiers at places like Kyo G’Lee. The DKBA at Wah Lay and in the ‘hump’ have been much more benevolent to the villagers than their colleagues elsewhere; villagers from this area consistently say that the DKBA protects them from the SPDC. When the DKBA is around the villages the SPDC generally doesn’t come. One villager even told KHRG that whenever the SPDC troops at Th’Waw Thaw (a.k.a. Sakanthit) or Kyo G’Lee are coming to their area to round up porters, the local DKBA warns the villagers to run and hide in the forest. There have been several incidents in the region of DKBA officers stepping in to rescue villagers from detention and torture by SPDC troops, and telling the SPDC to leave the villagers of this area alone. All of the villagers in this region are Karen; most of them are Buddhist, but the minorities of Christians and Animists among them say that they have suffered no persecution or abuse by the DKBA. Some villagers report that they would still prefer the KNU to the DKBA, but that as long as the SPDC remains in the area they are happy to have the DKBA around for protection.

“(T)hey [SPDC troops] come but they only stay a short time. They usually come once a week or once every 10 days. They don’t make trouble for the villagers because the DKBA are there. They don’t steal or enter the village because the DKBA are in the village. In the past they came and stole the chickens and the pigs. When they went into houses they took whatever they wanted. But now they don’t do anything to us because the DKBA are living in the area. ... (W)henever the Burmese are going to the frontline and are planning to capture people as porters, the DKBA tell us to run away and sleep in the jungle. ... The DKBA help the villagers with problems, but the Burmese only threaten to beat and arrest the villagers.” - “Pa Boh” (M, 38), K’Neh Thay Po Lay village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #9, 9/98)

“(T)hey [DKBA] came to Kwih Kalay and Tha Der Ko. Their leader is Commander Pa Ka. Pa Ka was a KNLA soldier before. Our guess is that they will arrive here, but we remember the KPA telling us that this area does not belong to the DKBA, that only the KPA can rule over this area. The KPA only travel together with the Burmese. But before that the DKBA said that they could rule over the entire territory of Burma. Recently the KPA told us that the DKBA can come to this area but they can only build pagodas and monasteries, they can’t do any other work. Anyway, we can’t understand the politics of it so we don’t care what they do. The only thing we want is for them not to force our people to do labour more than we can tolerate.” - “Pa Bway Htoo” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder, Dooplaya border (Interview #6, 9/98)

At the same time the SPDC has brought at least one group of DKBA soldiers back into central Dooplaya. Sources in the area report that a group of 38 DKBA soldiers has been

moved in to Tha Der Ko, near Kwih Kalay. They are building a pagoda there, and visitors to the area claim that they are using the forced labour of local villagers, both Buddhist and Christian. After this, villagers reported that some DKBA troops were also posted in the central village of Kyaikdon in August 1998. It appears that the SPDC has decided to allow the DKBA back into central Dooplaya, though to what extent is as yet unclear. Tha Der Ko is only about 5 kilometres south of the KPA headquarters at Klih, making it very possible that there could be a confrontation between the two groups. One KPA officer has told Dta La Ku villagers further south that Dooplaya belongs to the KPA, and that the DKBA can only be allowed there to do religious work, nothing political or military. It is possible that this is the explanation which the SPDC has given to the KPA, and this would explain why the DKBA are building a pagoda. However, it appears strange for the SPDC to bring the DKBA back to an area from which they were previously ejected just to build a pagoda. The SPDC may be planning to marginalise the KPA further and reinstall the DKBA gradually in the region, or it may be planning to set up a fight between the two. It is well known that the two groups see each other as potential enemies. If there is an open fight the KPA would stand little or no chance, unless the SPDC took their side and used this as a method to severely weaken the DKBA. The SPDC continues to distrust the DKBA, while the KPA tends to be a much more loyal proxy army. At this point it is still impossible to predict the effect of any potential reintroduction of the DKBA into central Dooplaya, but it is a situation which calls for close observation.

“Now 38 members of the DKBA have come to Kyaikdon and we don’t know what they will do. They don’t stay in Kyaikdon, but in a place above Kyaikdon called Tha Der Ko [this is a big hill north of Kyaikdon, near Kwih Kalay]. They aren’t building a road, but they said that they will build a religious centre at Tha Der Ko. The villagers must help them [building a pagoda]. It is mainly the Buddhists who have to help them, but the Christians also have to go whenever they are told. We heard that they had planned to attack Noh Po [refugee camp]. We don’t know when, but they said they will wait until the rivers get a little shallower.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

“When we came here [in August 1998], the DKBA were staying in Kyaikdon. They are staying in a different place than the Burmese because they just arrived from the lower plains [the west]. I heard that from other villagers. I don’t know how many DKBA soldiers are there, but there are approximately 3 to 4 hundred Burmese soldiers from Division 22.” - “Ko Sein Aung” (M, 21), Saw Hta village, central Dooplaya (Interview #1, 9/98)

“Before there were only Burmese soldiers and KNLA soldiers, but then there was also the DKBA. After that the KPA came along as well, so the villagers are required to work more. When the DKBA came the villagers had to give them whatever they required. When the KPA came the villagers also had to give whatever they required. When the Burmese came the villagers had to start working for them. The villagers cannot tolerate all of this, so they’ve fled from their villages.” - “Pa Bway Htoo” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder on the Burma-Thai border (Interview #6, 9/98)

Life of the Villagers

The SPDC continues to implement its general program for consolidating military control over all of the territory and civilians throughout Dooplaya. Their method for doing so varies slightly in different parts of the district; for example, forced labour and other abuses are somewhat less in areas near the border with Thailand because they know that the villagers can flee, and in the eastern 'hump' of Dooplaya they use the DKBA to pacify much of the area for them, and the DKBA has been using a 'hearts and minds' approach which makes things easier on the villagers. Villagers in central and southern Dooplaya report that the soldiers of Light Infantry Division #22 who now occupy their area are somewhat less brutal than the Light Infantry Division #44 troops who first came with the military offensive in February/March 1997. However, particularly in north-central, central, and southern Dooplaya, the general patterns of SPDC human rights abuse continue to occur, including extrajudicial killings, rape, arbitrary detention, torture, forced labour and forced relocations.

Killings and Other Abuses

“(I)f a battle occurs near a village then after that they kill any villagers they see because they say that the villagers are the energy of the KNU. They never leave villagers alive. If they don't kill them right away then they capture them and beat them. If they are not sure whether a farmer is a soldier or not they kill him.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K'Baw village, central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

In many parts of Dooplaya the KNLA continues to conduct limited guerrilla operations, particularly in the south. Wherever this occurs there are also incidents of killings of villagers by SPDC troops. In some cases these are random shootings of the first villagers seen after a KNLA ambush, and in other cases they occur when village elders or others are arrested as 'suspects' after the fighting occurs. One example of the former occurred on March 30, 1998, after a soldier from LIB 357 disappeared in southern Dooplaya. The other troops searched for him, and in the process they were shot at by a small group of KNLA soldiers. Shortly thereafter they saw Daw Naw Naw, a 21-year-old woman from Kone Kan village who was 7 months pregnant. Even though she repeatedly called out “I'm a good person!” they opened fire on her. She managed to run back to her house, but they followed, shot her dead there and shot her husband in the hand. Not long afterward they found the missing soldier, who had wounded his foot on the path and was being treated by a villager. In central Dooplaya in May/July 1998, SPDC troops captured a KNLA soldier and under interrogation he claimed that he had left his gun with the headman of Htee Law Bler village. The troops interrogated the headman, who had no gun but he couldn't answer their questions because he couldn't speak Burmese. They presumed him guilty, killed him and beheaded him before hanging the KNLA soldier and beheading him as well. Similar incidents continue to occur regularly throughout most parts of Dooplaya.

“A woman was coming back from her farm at about 1 p.m. The soldiers shouted at her and she responded, ‘I’m a good person! I’m a good person!’ They didn’t care what she said and started shooting at her. They shot with 4 or 5 guns. She ran behind a coconut tree and wasn’t hit. She ran to her house and the soldiers followed her there. They shot her dead at her house. She was shot once in her chest and once in her head. She was about 20 years old and pregnant when she died, her husband was about 23 years old.” - “Saw Win Than” (M, 50), Wah P’Theh village, southern Dooplaya, describing the behaviour of SPDC soldiers after they were shot at by the KNLA in March 1998 (Interview #2, 4/98)

“He [a captured KNLA soldier] said that he kept his weapon with the chairman of Htee Law Bler village. So the Burmese went to Htee Law Bler village. There were over 30 Burmese soldiers. They asked the chairman of Htee Law Bler village, ‘Did this guy keep his weapon with you?’ The chairman was not able to speak Burmese so he couldn’t answer properly. After that, the Burmese asked him many questions but he couldn’t answer. Finally, the Burmese forced him to look for the weapon in the area of Htee Maw Wih Kee. He couldn’t find any weapon so the Burmese cut off his head at the source of the river among the bamboo forest. ... The Burmese took [the captured KNLA soldier] to Htee Law Bler village and killed him. They hanged him by the neck from a jack-fruit tree. Then they cut off his head and his body fell to the ground while his head remained hanging from the rope.” - “Saw Kler Eh” (M, 53), Saw Hta village, central Dooplaya (Interview #10, 9/98)

“(T)hey killed one person in Nu Kloh Ti village. His name was Saw Dee Dee, son of Naw Mu Ku. He was a villager. He has no father, only a mother who is a widow. He arrived back to visit his village with his friend at night, so the next day he slept. The Burmese soldiers entered his village suddenly and asked his mother, ‘Where is the man of the house?’ His mother woke him up and he got up from his bed. He came out, and the Burmese soldiers immediately shot and killed him as soon as they saw him. They did this without any reason. ... This happened three months ago. His name was Dee Dee and he was 18 years old. He was not married. He was just a villager.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

Villagers continue to be arrested, detained and tortured on suspicion of having contact with the KNLA, or often simply because the SPDC troops want to obtain some weapons which they can report as being captured from the KNLA. To do so they simply detain and torture villagers, demanding to know “where the guns are” and insisting that they obtain some guns and hand them over.

“Before I fled, I was under the control of the Burmese for three months. The Burmese held me under arrest for three months, until three guns were given to them. ... In those three months I had to do forced labour every day. I had to carry their things, guide them to places where they wanted to go, walk along with them and do anything else that they asked of me.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya, describing why he first fled his village in mid-1997 (Interview #5, 9/98)

“Once they [SPDC] captured me, my mother-in-law, my brother-in-law, my cousin and another person from another village whom I didn’t know. That was when people were sowing paddy [in June 1998]. We were taken to Kyo G’Lee and held captive for 5 days. They put us in a shelter and locked our legs in stocks. They tied our hands behind our backs tightly so we couldn’t lie down or move, so we had to stay like this [he demonstrated that he could only sit with his legs in the stocks and his hands behind his back, he couldn’t lie down]. They accused us of being in contact with the KNU and of having a radio and weapons. They asked us to give them the weapons but we couldn’t give them what we didn’t have. They asked us to look for the weapons and the radio. How could we find those? We couldn’t find anything. That’s the reason they beat us. The Burmese put something on my back and then stepped on me. They beat my head with the butt of their gun, taw! taw! I was bleeding from three cuts on my head. They beat me a few times each day. They finally released us because the DKBA came and asked them to release us, and we returned to our wives and children.” - “Pa Boh” (M, 38), K’Neh Thay Po Lay village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #9, 9/98)

Village headmen are regularly beaten or detained for not complying with orders for forced labourers or extortion money, and as a result some villages are finding it difficult to appoint new headmen. In many villages the local SPDC military simply appoints a headman with or without his agreement, then issues orders through him. Some villages have chosen female village heads, hoping that this will alleviate the physical abuse.

“Division 22 went down to Klay Thu village and arrested 2 village headmen. They beat them and one of them died. ... They questioned him and accused him of not answering truthfully. ... At about 10 p.m. they beat 6 people but only that village headman was seriously hurt, the rest were farmers. They tied their hands tightly behind their backs and kicked them, beat them and shot them with slingshots many times. Four people, a corporal and 3 soldiers, took turns beating them. They beat them with bamboo as thick as my wrist. They kicked their heads, backs and stomachs with jungle boots until they couldn’t breathe. When they stopped breathing they stopped for a moment to wait until they breathed again and then continued beating them. ... I saw it happen from a distance but was afraid to go near them. They beat them for 2 hours until they were satisfied and then let them go. They said to them, ‘Commit this to your memory. This is the price for not telling us the truth when we ask you questions.’ The village headman [age 50] was sent to the hospital near Ler Mer but the hospital said he was too badly injured and they couldn’t help him. They sent him back to his house and he died there.” - “Saw Win Than” (M, 50), Wah P’Theh village, southern Dooplaya (Interview #2, 4/98)

“In Saw Hta area the village headmen have all been chosen by the Burmese soldiers, such as the headmen of the villages of Wah Lu, Ta Ri Kee and K’Yeh Theh. But later they still persecute the village headmen.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

Rapes by SPDC troops also continue to occur sporadically in central and southern Dooplaya. However, in each of three or four cases recently reported to KHRG, after the rape the villagers reported it to the SPDC commander and the soldier was then punished. Punishments vary between being stripped and beaten in front of the other soldiers, forced to do hard labour for a short time, being detained or sent off to prison, or being transferred to another unit. Though these punishments are clearly insufficient and some incidents still go unpunished, it is significant that rape is the only human rights abuse by SPDC troops for which perpetrators face a significant possibility of punishment of any kind. As a result soldiers and junior officers who commit rape in Dooplaya usually try to do it covertly and tell the woman that they will kill her if she tells the senior officer. In Burmese culture, rape is generally considered a worse crime than murder and the SPDC is very sensitive to accusations on this subject.

“There were two men, and one covered her mouth while the other held her arms and they carried her down to the bushes just at the edge of the village. We don’t know how many people were at the place where she was raped so it may have been more than just the two of them who raped her. She tried to shout but she couldn’t make any noise because they had covered her mouth. They raped her for 2 hours. When they were finished they set her free and she came back. Her face looked like she wanted to cry but she couldn’t cry or smile. She covered herself with a blanket until morning because she was ashamed. After that the girl didn’t dare say anything about what she had suffered because she felt shy and afraid the soldiers would kill her if she told people they’d raped her.” - “Saw Win Than” (M, 50), Wah P’Theh village, southern Dooplaya, describing a rape in August 1997 by SLORC troops at his village (Interview #2, 4/98)

Extortion and Looting

“When they came in the hot season last year, they came with a bulldozer. They told the villagers how much food they had eaten in town and the cost of the fuel [for the bulldozer] and demanded that we pay for it. The Saw Hta villagers had to pay 100,000 [Kyat]. There are over 200 houses in Saw Hta village, and they came to collect taxes whenever they wanted. They taxed us once a month, but sometimes we had to pay twice a month. I have little money so I was only taxed 500 Kyats. Richer villagers had to pay 2 to 4 thousand Kyats [each time]. I suffered from having to porter and from paying the taxes of 500 Kyats. Each house had to pay that much. Those villagers who couldn’t give 500 Kyats were ordered to give 300 Kyats and those who couldn’t afford that had to spend a day and night in the stocks in the police jail. Some villagers went to do daily labour which paid 400 Kyats and then gave that to the Burmese.” - “Ko Sein Aung” (M, 21), Saw Hta village, central Dooplaya (Interview #1, 9/98)

In all areas of Dooplaya where the SPDC exerts direct control, systematic extortion and occasional looting are taking place. The main exception is the eastern ‘hump’, where as mentioned above the presence of the DKBA keeps the SPDC troops out of most villages. Even there, when SPDC patrols do pass through a village the villagers say that they loot their livestock. In central and southern Dooplaya, villages where SPDC troops are based

such as Saw Hta and Taung Zone have a constant problem with troops looting their livestock, fruits and vegetables.

“We told them there’s an old military camp there, why don’t you prepare it and stay there? But they said they didn’t want to stay there. They stayed in the village, mostly in the houses of women who have children. Their commander came to sleep in my house one time. The village chairman’s house is very big, but they didn’t stay there. [They like to use the women and children as shields against attack.] ... They didn’t bring their own rice. They also stole our fruit and vegetables that grow near our houses, like corn, cucumbers and many kinds of fruit. They stole our chickens at night when we couldn’t see. If we went to tell their commander, he said, ‘If you see them, just tell them not to do it’. When they rotated their troops, they took all the chickens and sold them in Saw Hta village. If they’re sleeping in Po Hsi Mu, they go to Meh T’Leh to steal. Whenever they’re patrolling they look to see who has a lot of chickens. They sleep two nights in the village, then they leave for two or three days and then come back again.” - “Naw Ghay Wah” (F, 31), schoolteacher describing the situation in Po Hsi Mu village, near Saw Hta (Interview #4, 9/98)

When SLORC/SPDC troops first arrived in the region they did a lot of looting and also demanded large one-time sums of money from villagers in some places. As the occupation continues, the extortion of money, food and building materials is becoming more systematic. For example, in Saw Hta village of central Dooplaya the villagers are graded by relative wealth; the wealthier villagers are forced to pay two to four thousand Kyat per family per month in extortion, while the poorer farmers are forced to pay 500 Kyat per month. In both cases, the amount is calculated to be all the money the family could possibly procure in a month, though it often turns out to be more than they can get. In Saw Hta those who can’t pay 500 Kyats are ordered to pay 300, and if they can’t even do that then they are taken to spend a day and night with their legs in stocks at the local police jail.

“...according to the agreement of the Kyaung Ywa village tract headmen and small village leaders, xxxx village is assessed (two thousand) for servants’ fees. Therefore, [you] are informed to come and pay this money at Kyaung Ywa village.” - Text of written SPDC order to a village in southern Dooplaya, May 1998 (Order #4)

“[You] are informed to send (30) logs, (6) inches in diameter and (8) feet in length, for repairs to the camp, to Kyaung Ywa camp before 25-1-98. If [you] fail to send [them], it will be the gentleman’s [i.e. your] responsibility alone.” - Text of written SPDC order to a village in southern Dooplaya, January 1998 (Order #5)

SPDC units also stop traders moving goods or livestock and villagers who are transporting rice and extort either money or part of their load in order to allow them to pass. When many Dta La Ku villagers were fleeing Kwih Kler area to go south to Kwih Lat Der, a group of SPDC troops knew they were moving and set up a roadblock each morning to collect 500 Kyats from each cart before allowing it to pass. There have also been several reports of traders being stopped, whether or not they have already paid the

required 'taxes', and either the trader or his goods being held captive until a ransom in money, livestock or goods has been paid.

“There were 1 Corporal and 12 soldiers. They collected taxes from the villagers who were carrying rice by ox-cart, 500 Kyats from each ox-cart. Whether we carried one basket or 5 baskets of rice in the ox-cart, we had to pay 500 Kyats. If we didn't give the money to the Burmese at Meh Tharaw Hta, they wouldn't allow us to go. After I gave them money, 500 Kyats, they allowed me to go. They collected money from the villagers as though they were begging for food.” - “Saw Htoo Po” (M, 25), Meh T'Ler village, central Doooplaya (Interview #3, 9/98)

“In Kyaikdon there was a 100-year-old pagoda called Oorey Pagoda. The Burmese know that the old pagodas have many valuable objects inside, so they destroy these pagodas to steal the valuables. After that, the Burmese soldiers order the villagers to build a new pagoda but don't give them any building supplies. The Burmese soldiers already reported that they've destroyed the old Oorey Pagoda and that they've built a new pagoda in its place. That is what they did. Don't ever think that they will help the people.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K'Baw village, central Doooplaya, describing what he saw on his July-September 1998 visit to central Doooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

Forced Labour

“They ordered the Kwih Kler villagers to go to their camp every day, their camp was there. They forced 2 villagers to do sentry duty around their camp. Even though the villagers had a lot of work to do they forced them to help them. They only called men to help, but if there were no men in the house a woman had to go. The women were forced to clean their camp. The women also had to clean [wipe and polish] the gate that was in the fence surrounding the camp. The men were forced to clear and dig out mud from the bunkers. A sentry forced me to enter the camp. I went with my friend from Htee Hta Baw village. ... The Burmese forced us to enter the camp and to dig mud for the Signal Corps. We also had to dig out the mud in the bunkers. When I was digging I got a cold with a bad cough and chest pain. My body was in a lot of pain and I had to take penicillin. ... I also had to do sentry duty twice for one day and a night each time. They didn’t give me food and I had to sleep at the camp in the evening. I could see my house from their camp but they still forced us to sleep on the ground at the gate of their camp, they didn’t allow us to enter the camp. We slept at night but sometimes they forced some of us to follow them in the night. ... In the morning we went back to the village to eat and then we went back to their camp to work until evening. Then my friend came to replace us and we went back.” - “Saw Htoo Po” (M, 25), Meh T’Ler village, central Dooplaya (Interview #3, 9/98)

Villagers throughout central and southern Dooplaya face a steady stream of demands by SPDC troops for various kinds of forced labour. One of the most common is forced labour related to roads. Villagers from Kwih Kler say they have already been forced to cut down many of their coconut trees to clear a path for what is supposed to be a new road from Saw Hta to Kwih Kler and Lay Po Hta, possibly to replace the rough existing road. Forced labour building this road could begin as early as November or December 1998, now that the rains are over. In mid-February 1998 two convoys totalling 50-70 trucks loaded with convicts from prisons throughout Burma were brought to Kyaikdon and Saw Hta to do forced labour on roads, and this could happen again in the coming dry season; this would lighten the load on the villagers, but they would still most likely be called for forced labour. The road from Kyaikdon and Po Yay eastward through the hills to Kyo G’Lee and then northward to Wah Lay, which was being built with bulldozers by Frontline Engineers #904 Battalion, was reportedly finished in April/May 1998. However, the SPDC troops are reportedly too afraid to use it because of their fear of ambush by the KNLA troops who occupy the remote hills along part of the route, and by now the road has probably been at least partly destroyed by the rains.

“They haven’t built the roads yet but they’ve already cleared the bushes and coconut trees to make way for the road [around Kwih Kler].” - “Saw Meh Doh” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder from Kwih Lat Der village, southern Dooplaya (Interview #7, 9/98)

At the moment most of the road labour throughout Dooplaya involves clearing roadsides and maintaining roads that now exist. Villagers in Meh T’Lah of central Dooplaya have to work on a fence several kilometres long along the sides of the road near their village which is supposed to protect the road from being landmined by the KNLA. At least 100

villagers at a time have to work building this fence. In the far south of Dooplaya several villages were forced to relocate earlier in 1998 to sites near the Ye-Thanyuzayat road, which is the main north-south coastal road. They were then used together with villagers who already lived there for steady rotations of forced labour maintaining and upgrading the road. Work on this road appears to be done for the moment, but the villagers still have to do other kinds of forced labour and will probably be called back to repair the road once again after it is damaged by the next rainy season in 1999.

“They forced the villagers to build a fence that goes further than from here to Kwih Kler! [7 or 8 hours’ walk away, about 20 km.] The villagers must weave bamboo to make the fence along both sides of the road. About one hundred people were building the fence every day.” - “Pu Bway Doh” (M, 82), Dta La Ku villager from Meh T’Lah village (Interview #8, 9/98)

“They just rebuilt the car road which leads to Sa Keh, it goes from Saw Hta to Kyaikdon. There is also a car road from Kyaikdon to [Kya In] Seik Gyi but it’s not as well built as the roads you see around here - it looks more like an oxcart track. The villagers had to work on it. When the Burmese first came, they came with a bulldozer to dig the mud for the construction of the road because the villagers weren’t able to make the road correctly, but then they took the bulldozer away and the villagers had to do the work. The bulldozer hasn’t come again since last year. There is also a road that connects Saw Hta, Kwih Lat Der and Htee Hta Baw which was built back when everyone was living there [before the SLORC/SPDC occupation, when the area was controlled by the KNU]. Now they are working on this old road using machetes and mattocks [large hoes; this is being done as forced labour by the villagers].” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya, describing what he saw on his July-September 1998 visit to central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

Villagers throughout central and southern Dooplaya are used almost constantly for forced labour as porters, and in eastern Dooplaya the troops go to the villages to look for porters whenever their troops rotate, which is every few months. Most villages in central and southern Dooplaya are under standing written orders to provide a certain number of ‘permanent porters’ on a rotating basis; the number is usually 3 to 10 per village depending on village size, and the people must take along their own food for shifts of 3 to 5 days. During this time they are used as porters as well as messengers and sentries. Not only must the villages provide these ‘permanent porters’, but the troops also round up porters or catch people in their fields whenever they need additional porters, for example to carry their rations from supply drop-off points. Demands are occasionally made for large numbers of people, for example one person per household, when an operations column is heading on a journey of several days’ distance, such as the trip from Saw Hta to Htee Hta Baw, which is over 60 kilometres in a straight line.

“You the headperson are informed to send 5 permanent servants with their own rice to arrive today for the use of Frontline #208 Light Infantry Battalion, Column 2, and prepare to rotate the servants every 5 days.” - Text of written SPDC order to a village in western Dooplaya, July 1998 (Order #2)

“(I)f the Burmese soldiers went on patrol, they forced the village headman to collect 3 or 4 villagers to carry their things. They don’t call them porters, they call them ‘servants’ [wontan]. The village headman has to find the people to do it and rotate the people every time. They have to carry bullets and rice. They have to go for three days at a time.” - “Naw Ghay Wah” (F, 31), schoolteacher describing the situation in Po Hsi Mu village, near Saw Hta (Interview #4, 9/98)

“In the evening at 8:30 p.m., when the villagers were watching a movie, they entered the place where we were watching the video. They told the men to be porters. We didn’t dare flee. They collected 10 to 20 villagers to porter from each village, over 200 villagers at a time altogether. The villagers came from Dta Ray Kee, Tee Wah Klay, Meh K’Dtee, Taw T’Naw Kee, Lay Po Kee, Kyaw Kee, Tee Meh Baw, Kaser Po Kler, Meh Tha Ler, Kwih Kler, Dta Nay Pya and Po Hsi Mu villages. ... We had to follow a few soldiers. I had to carry rice and there were G3 bullets together with the rice, it weighed about 18 viss [29 kg / 64 pounds]. Sometimes I had to carry their bags and pots. We had to carry things to Kyun Chaung [southern Dooplaya] and Ler Theh Wee. We walked for 5 days on the way to Kyun Chaung. They only rested at 6 or 7 p.m., sometimes 10 p.m. They started going at 6 a.m. ... Some porters had to carry big shells. My shoulders were bruised, as were the shoulders of all the porters. Some porters were crying. A villager named Po Thu Daw, who was over 45 years old, was crying. The youngest porter was 16 or 17 years old. I was a porter for 18 days, then I fled from them at Kyun Chaung. 4 or 5 porters from Saw Hta village are left with them and the rest of us fled.” - “Ko Sein Aung” (M, 21), Saw Hta village, central Dooplaya (Interview #1, 9/98)

“They demand porters once a week. People who can’t go must pay 1,000 Kyats, and those who can go must go. All of my friends below here, near the car road which is about 9 miles [14.5 km] from my place, have to porter. ... They have to carry rice and the chickens that the soldiers steal during the night. They also steal goats and pigs and never pay for them. The villagers don’t say anything because they’re afraid and they think that giving the Burmese what they want is better than being persecuted and killed. They steal the rice from the villagers’ farmfield huts which are far from the village and they eat that together with all the chickens.” - “Saw Win Than” (M, 50), Wah P’Theh village, southern Dooplaya (Interview #2, 4/98)

“When their column went to the front line, they always forced 6 porters [from his village] to follow them. We were 60 people in all. They forced all the men to go. As for the old people who couldn’t walk, someone would have to go in their place, usually their son. If there were no men in a family, the family had to pay 300 Kyats. ... The Burmese forced groups of 6 from each village to go one after another, 2 days each time. For example, after they forced the Kwih Kler village group to go, it was the turn of another group from another village. They rotated groups from each village in this way. If they didn’t have enough people, we had to go again [twice in a row]. Each person had to carry twelve 60 mm mortar shells.” - “Saw Htoo Po” (M, 25), Meh T’Ler village, central Dooplaya (Interview #3, 9/98)

“A porter from Meh T’Kreh fled but the Burmese captured him again and beat him. The Burmese beat him many times and kicked him until he fell down. When I saw that, I took great pity on him. The Burmese beat him with a bamboo stick and he shouted very loudly. The stick was as thick as a big toe - some that they use are as thick as knife handles. The bamboo was already dry, and the Burmese beat his back, boan, boan! His back became so swollen that we couldn’t stand to look at him. He wasn’t able to carry anything so the Burmese left him on the path. He was able to

return to the village as we were not far from the village. Three porters from Saw Hta were sick with malaria and they were left behind also.” - “Ko Sein Aung” (M, 21), Saw Hta village, central Dooplaya (Interview #1, 9/98)

In addition to portering on foot, villagers in some areas have to go with their ox carts to haul SPDC supplies, and in central Dooplaya the few villagers who own motor vehicles are forced to use them for the same purpose. In March 1998, one such car was blown up by a landmine while hauling SPDC supplies, killing a child and wounding the parents (see below under ‘Landmines’).

“#12 Military Operations Command Headquarters requires cart porters urgently. Therefore, [send] 1 cart with 1 team of bullocks together with enough rations from each of your villages to arrive at the Village Peace and Development Council office together at 4 o’clock this evening without fail, you are informed. ... If there is failure and those from the Army camp come to arrest you, it will not be our responsibility.” - Text of written SPDC order to a village in western Dooplaya, June 1998 (Order #3)

Villagers must also do rotating shifts of forced labour in SPDC camps at Saw Hta, Kwih Kler, Meh Za Lee and other sites throughout Dooplaya. Often the women are forced to cook and clean while the men are used to build and maintain barracks, bunkers and booby-traps. The men must also act as messengers and guides, and spend their nights around the perimeter of the camp as unarmed sentries. One villager from Meh T’Ler in central Dooplaya even reported being forced to spend day after day weaving baskets for the forced porters to use when carrying ammunition for the troops. He stated that neither he nor the others knew how to weave baskets, but the troops called in some other villagers to teach them.

“(T)he villagers have to do many kinds of forced labour. Every day, two or three people from each village have to go and stay in the Burmese camp and do whatever the Burmese soldiers ask them to do, such as standing sentry, portering, and other things. The Saw Hta villagers have to do forced labour every day. One person from each family has to go. If there are no men in the family then a woman must go. Children aged 16 and above must go. They [Burmese soldiers] don’t care about old age. The old people must go also.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

“To build Taung Zone camp, you are informed to come with (26) voluntary labourers with one bowl of rice each, to xxxx monastery on the 2nd at 8 o’clock without fail.” - Text of a written SPDC order to a village in southern Dooplaya, June 1998 (Order #1)

“They forced me to weave baskets. They didn’t teach me how to weave but they still forced me to weave. They found villagers who could weave and they taught us. We had to weave until evening and then we went to sleep. In the morning the sentry beat the hollow log, Tone! Tone! Tone! and we had to go and weave again. We had to cut the cane nicely, if it wasn’t nice they didn’t like it. The baskets were used to carry ammunition [by porters]. We also had to repair their fence if it was broken.

Sometimes we had to use bamboo spikes to make booby traps. We had to whittle the bamboo all day and then dig a hole in the earth.” - “Saw Htoo Po” (M, 25), Meh T’Ler village, central Dooplaya (Interview #3, 9/98)

Some forced labour has also been demanded for building pagodas, both by the DKBA at Tha Der Ko and by the SPDC in other parts of northern and central Dooplaya. Villagers have also reported having to do forced labour growing crops for SPDC troops in the southern and western parts of the district.

“They are building pagodas everywhere. The soldiers order the villagers to build the pagodas. The Christians have to go sometimes too, whenever they are told to. Do not say that the soldiers will help you. Even when your back is wounded from carrying sand the soldiers will continue to watch over you with guns.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya, describing what he saw on his July-September 1998 visit to central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

“Each of these villages had to provide 100 baskets of paddy seed and sow it for the Burmese. They had to plough, sow, harvest and pound the paddy, they had to do everything. All of the rice that is produced from the 100 baskets of seed must be given to the Burmese soldiers. They don’t have time to do their own work so they couldn’t tolerate staying there. That is happening in Kru Tu Kee, Lay Tai and Kler Ta Gu, in Kawkareik township.” - “Pa Bway Htoo” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder on the Burma-Thai border (Interview #6, 9/98)

“The people who live under the authority of the Burmese must do forced labour for them and must also go as porters. Those who live with the Burmese sometimes have to carry things from Kyaikdon down to Kalay Kee and to [Kya In] Seik Gyi. Sometimes they have to carry things from Kyaikdon up to Kwih Kler, Kwih Lat Der, and Htee Hta Baw. [Htee Hta Baw is several days’ walk south of Kyaikdon, towards Three Pagodas Pass.] The villagers who don’t live close to the enemy are living in the jungle, on the mountains and at the source of the rivers. The people who are living in the jungle do not show themselves because they don’t want to work for the SPDC.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

“When they were forcing you to porter, did they say anything to you?”

“Yes, they said to us, ‘Nga Lo Ma Tha!’ [‘I fucked your mother and you are the child!’], ‘Kway Ma Tha!’ [‘Son of a bitch!’], and ‘You are a lazy porter and if I kick you, you’ll go flying!’” - “Ko Sein Aung” (M, 21), Saw Hta village, central Dooplaya (Interview #1, 9/98)

Forced Relocations

“They don’t force them [at gunpoint] but they order them to go and live at the relocation sites. The villagers don’t dare to go because they know that people who go and live there have to do forced labour and are beaten by the Burmese soldiers, and

sometimes they are killed. So the villagers always run away whenever they tell them to go and live at a relocation site. The villagers from Thay Pa Htaw had to relocate to Po Yay. Because of the relocation many of the villagers fled and several villages were destroyed. Now the Thay Pa Htaw villagers have returned to Thay Pa Htaw village and are staying there again. In Kya In area, near [Kya In] Seik Gyi, the Burmese relocated villages like T’Ka Kee and Kalay Kee. ... Now nobody is living in Kalay Kee village because the Burmese already forced them to move, and there is also nobody in Toh Kee. The villagers are now all spread out. Nobody is there.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya, describing what he saw on his July-September 1998 visit to central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

In January 1998, many Karen villages in the far south of Dooplaya were forced by SPDC Infantry Battalion #230 to relocate to Thanbyuzayat and Three Pagodas Pass. Meh K’Naw, Meh K’Wa, Htee Kay, Htee Klih Thu, Lay May, Htee Po Yu, Ah Pa Lone, Lay Po, Hsing Pyay, Kwih Prer Htee, Maw Po and other villages were given 3 days to move, after which several houses in each village were burned and Meh K’Naw and Htee Maw Keh villages were burned completely. Suffering from lack of food at the relocation site, the villagers finally managed to get permission to return to their villages, but they now have to pay extortion money regularly to IB 230 and go on rotating shifts of 3 days’ portering labour. Anyone who cannot go must pay 1,000 Kyats.

In the latter part of 1997 several other villages in southern Dooplaya were forced to move to Taung Zone (a.k.a. Lay Noh) and Anand Gwin (a.k.a. Noh Chut Neh) along the road from Thanbyuzayat to Three Pagodas Pass, and to Kaneh Kamaw and Gker (a.k.a. Beh Hla Mu) near the Ye-Thanbyuzayat road.

“They haven’t ordered us to relocate yet, but they have already relocated villagers from below our place [downstream] to places near their camps alongside the road. I know of 3 villages that have been relocated. Wah Pa Theh and Gru Mer were relocated to Gker [a.k.a. Beh Hla Mu], and Way T’Lay was relocated to Kaneh Kamaw. ... They wrote a letter to Kwih K’Saw Si [village] which said, ‘If you don’t relocate in 7 days we will burn down your village and persecute the villagers.’ They didn’t say where to go, they just demanded that they not stay in their village any more. All the Kwih K’Saw villagers left their village when they received the letter and went to wherever their relatives were living.” - “Saw Win Than” (M, 50), Wah P’Theh village, southern Dooplaya (Interview #2, 4/98)

Several villages in the Kya In Seik Gyi area of western Dooplaya, such as T’Ka Kee, Toh Kee and Kalay Kee, have been forced to move and the villagers have scattered. In central Dooplaya, many pockets of remote villages were forced to move, such as K’Lah Lay, Dta Ri and Htee Po Ghaw, which were forced to Dta Nay Pya.

“Before we fled they forced the villagers from such places as K’Lah Lay, Dta Ri and Htee Po Ghaw to go and stay in Dta Nay Pya together and build their own houses there. Villagers who were staying outside the villages in their farmfield huts were forced to move into Bu Kler village. The villagers couldn’t find work there and they

couldn't work their land anymore. They were given no food but had to find food for themselves, so they asked the Burmese if they could return to their villages to farm. The Burmese agreed to let them go and now they have gone back to their villages.” - “Saw Htoo Po” (M, 25), Meh T’Ler village, central Dooplaya (Interview #3, 9/98)

The general practice has been to force small and remote villages to move to larger villages which are more directly under the control of SPDC troops. In many villages, particularly in central Dooplaya, orders were issued for all villagers living in houses or farmfield huts outside the villages to move into the centre of their villages. In southern and western Dooplaya some of the relocations have not been rescinded, but many of the villagers in central Dooplaya who were forced to relocate were later allowed to go back to their villages after complaining that they could not farm or earn their living. Even so, villagers who live in remote areas or out in their fields are always at high risk of being caught as porters or shot by patrolling SPDC troops. Relocations continue to be ordered sporadically whenever and wherever KNLA activity flares up. In areas of southern and western Dooplaya where villagers cannot get permission to return to their home villages, they have no choice but to try to find a living at relocation villages or in the villages of their relatives. This is extremely difficult, because these places tend to be quite strongly SPDC-controlled, often even having an SPDC base right at the village, so the relocated villagers are used all the time for forced labour and have trouble paying all the extortion fees levied on them.

“The villagers in Kaser Po Kler also came to stay in Saw Hta. They didn't dare stay in Kaser Po Kler any longer because the Burmese were forcing them to stay right in the village so they were afraid. The Burmese aren't forcing people to relocation sites but they don't allow the villagers to stay outside the villages or in their farmfield huts. They force them back to stay in the village.” - “Ko Sein Aung” (M, 21), Saw Hta village, central Dooplaya (Interview #1, 9/98)

Internally Displaced People

“(M)y guess is that there are more than 100 families of villagers living there in the jungle [just in the Noh Maw Po area]. They began living in the jungle when the Burmese first arrived, over a year ago. The Burmese know they are in the jungle and they go looking for them sometimes, but the people always hide themselves. Each family keeps 4 or 5 shelters in different places. When the Burmese come near one of their shelters they run to another shelter, and when the Burmese move on toward that shelter they run to the next one of their shelters. ... Each family works two or three fields in different places. Every time the Burmese commander orders his soldiers to go out, the villagers in the jungle must run away.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya, describing what he saw on his July-September 1998 visit to central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

At least several hundred families remain internally displaced in central Dooplaya, not daring to go back to their villages but afraid to run to Thailand. Most of them are villagers who could no longer bear the burden of rotating forced labour but had no money to pay to avoid it, while some are villagers who fled the initial SLORC/SPDC offensive to the forest, and are afraid that if they return to their villages now they will be arrested and suspected of contact with the KNLA. Some of these families already fled to Thailand once but were forced back by Thai troops; some of them were among the group which was shot at and terrorised by Thai troops at Thay Pu Law Htwee in November 1997 (see *“Strengthening the Grip on Dooplaya”*, KHRG #98-05, 10/6/98, for further details). There are also scattered families of internally displaced villagers in the south of Dooplaya near the Three Pagodas Pass-Thanyuzayat road, who fled the forced relocations of villages in the area in late 1997 and early 1998 and are now living in the hills. Several thousand people from southern Dooplaya have fled southward to Mon-held areas since the occupation in early 1997, and some people continue to flee in that direction.

“When the Burmese started to come to their villages they fled together to Thay Pu Law Htwee. But then the Thai soldiers threatened them by shooting their guns at them, so they were afraid and went back to stay in the jungle. Now they stay in the jungle because they don’t dare come to Thailand again. They are afraid.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya, who spent time with the displaced in central Dooplaya in August 1998 (Interview #5, 9/98)

“They didn’t destroy our homes but they took any food they found in our houses, such as salt, Ajinomoto [MSG seasoning] and shrimp paste. They took everything they found. They also took rice, though they left some behind for the owner. All the men ran to the jungle. Only the women and children stayed in the village. All of the villagers from Meh K’Lah Kee, about 6 families, are still living in the jungle. The Burmese soldiers told them to go live in Kyo G’Lee or K’Neh Thay Po Lay.” - “Pa Boh” (M, 38), K’Neh Thay Po Lay village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #9, 9/98)

In central Dooplaya it is very difficult to remain hidden for internally displaced people, as the terrain of the central plain is easy for SPDC troops to move around, and in some areas there is not a lot of forest cover. The SPDC regularly issues orders for these people to return to their villages, but they dare not for fear of arrest. They stay in small groups of shelters in the forest, fleeing from one shelter to another every month or two when an SPDC patrol comes near their shelters. Each family has 4 or 5 shelters and 2 or 3 small ricefields, scattered in different places so that they can keep ahead of SPDC patrols. Because they always have to move, they have difficulty growing or obtaining enough food, and they have no access whatsoever to medicines. Many of these people have already died of disease, particularly children and the elderly.

“People are still living in the villages which are near the [Thai] border, but there are no people in the villages starting from Dta Broh and Kay Lu Nee. There are no people in Dta Broh Kee. There are people in K’Yeh Theh and Yaw Ka Daw. Their area is mined and the Burmese control them. There are also mines around Yan Day Ya and there are people living there.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

“Those in the jungle are not so healthy because they have no medicine with them. They suffer from malaria, oedema, abscesses, dysentery, diarrhoea, headaches, ‘dee klih law’ [symptomised by grotesque swelling of one or both testicles], gastric pains, belly pains, numbness [quasi-paralysis brought on by severe Vitamin B deficiency], ringworm and many other illnesses. Of course, they die from the illnesses sometimes. Both children and adults have died because there is no medicine.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

Problems for Farmers

“They [the villagers] can’t stay in their field huts because when they go to their farms they must get a pass that only lasts for one day’s work. If they don’t have a pass then they [SPDC soldiers] treat them as their enemy. ... The villagers had to give the Burmese some rice even though they [the soldiers] already received some rice from town [their rations]. Now in Kyaikdon area they have taken some fields. The Burmese are supervising these confiscated fields and forcing the villagers to work often on the fields. The Burmese have established a paddy plantation at Kyaikdon but it is the villagers who have to do all the work on it.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya, describing what he saw on his July-September 1998 visit to central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

Even farmers living in their villages are having a lot of difficulties under the SPDC occupation. Throughout all of Dooplaya other than the DKBA areas in the east, the SPDC has placed tight restrictions on farmers to make sure they cannot support the KNLA in any way. In central Dooplaya, families who used to live in their farmfield huts or houses far from the village have been ordered to relocate into the centre of their villages, which makes it extremely difficult for them because their fields can be 2 hours

or more on foot from the village. Compounding this, all villagers are not allowed to leave their villages without an SPDC pass. In some areas, the pass requires them to return before sunset even if their fields are a long distance away, while in other villages they can get a pass allowing them to spend only one or two nights in their farmfield hut. Rice farming is labour-intensive, and it is difficult to tend a crop and protect it from animals while only being allowed to stay in the farmfield hut for one or two nights at a time during growing season.

When they go to their fields they are only allowed to take a very small amount of rice, in order that there be no way they could give any to KNLA troops. This is so tightly restricted that farmers usually can't even take as much as they would normally eat; when doing physical labour Karen farmers eat a lot of rice, but the SPDC limits them to taking as little as one milk tin (about 200 grams) of uncooked rice for a day, no more than half what they would usually eat. Once in their fields, even with a pass they are at high risk of being shot on sight by SPDC patrols or captured as porters. In addition to all of these problems, the shortage of rain in the early part of the 1998 growing season has destroyed much of the crop; without enough rice to eat and facing constant demands for extortion money and labour for SPDC troops, life will be very difficult for farmers in Dooplaya over the coming year.

Education

“No children are going to school because the Burmese came and destroyed all the schools. If the situation is good the children can go to school.” - “Pu Meh Thu” (M, 70), Bo Kler village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #15, 9/98)

All of the former village schools throughout Dooplaya which were operated by the villagers themselves or by the Karen National Union (KNU) have been forced to close down under the SPDC occupation. The SPDC has only set up a few schools in major villages such as Azin and Kyaikdon, but few children outside these villages have access to these schools, particularly young children. People in outlying villages, and particularly those who are internally displaced, are afraid to send their children away to schools in large SPDC-controlled villages. As a result, most children in Dooplaya are no longer able to go to school.

“There was one schoolteacher there. Then the government changed all the rules and made us teach only Burmese subjects. They wouldn't allow us to teach in Karen language. But that other teacher couldn't teach in Burmese [so he/she lost the job].” - “Naw Ghay Wah” (F, 31), schoolteacher from Pa'an district who was ordered to move and become a teacher in Dooplaya after the SLORC occupation (Interview #4, 9/98)

“Before there was a school but after the Burmese came the school was destroyed. My 18-year-old son has never been to school. Before he was going to start going to school his mother died. He was young and I couldn't do anything for him. When he got bigger people asked him to join the army. ... He has been a soldier 3 times. He was a

DKBA soldier once for more than one year and had to go to Wah Lay but he was never in a battle. ... He was a KNLA soldier twice, the first time he served for more than one year and the second time he served for more than 3 years. But he never served for the Burmese. The three times that he served as a soldier, it was demanded of him. When he was a KNLA soldier the first time, the KNLA commander came and demanded that he be a soldier. Then when he became a DKBA soldier, they came to his home and called him outside then made him join the army. This time, now [still ongoing], the KNLA came and demanded he be a soldier for three years but now he is allowed to stay at home because he has already served a lot. He was about 15 years old the first time he became a soldier. After that he was tired, he didn't want to become a soldier again but he had to." - "Pu Tha Wah" (M, 66), Bo Kler Kee village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #13, 9/98)

In the SPDC schools only Burmese curriculum is taught; all is supposed to be taught in Burmese language and Karen language is not allowed to be taught, but as some of the teachers are Karen they often teach in Karen even though they are not supposed to. In Po Hsi Mu the Karen teacher was sacked by the SPDC authorities because he could not speak Burmese well enough, and this may have happened at other schools as well. From March through May 1998, the SPDC held a primary school teacher training in Kya In Seik Gyi township for SPDC-authorized teachers from Dooplaya and other surrounding regions. This was conducted under the 'Border Areas Development Programme', an SPDC programme with support from United Nations agencies which mainly focusses on improving infrastructure for military access to the border areas and 'Burmanising' the ethnic nationalities. According to a Karen teacher who attended the training, the trainer was a Burman woman from Mandalay who constantly verbally abused the 31 Karens at the training and treated them as second-class citizens until they no longer wanted to be there. The trainees did not receive enough food and had to spend much of their own money to support themselves during the three months. Then on returning to Po Hsi Mu village, this Karen teacher and her husband both had their teaching salaries withheld by local authorities until they couldn't survive and had to flee to Thailand.

"They called 8 people from Saw Hta area, including me, to attend the training in Leh Gu. It was in March 1998. I went to attend the training for 3 months in Leh Gu. ... They called it 'Border Areas Development'. Three months of special primary school teacher training. It was in Kya In Seik Gyi township. There were 31 of us from Karen State, 6 men and 25 women. I was the leader of the women. At the training they spoke to us very harshly. The border development supervisor was a Burmese woman from Mandalay. She scolded us. She told me, 'You people from Karen State, your bags are very small [i.e. you brought very little], haven't you ever been to a training before?' We didn't want to go to their training! But the soldiers ordered me to go, and they said, 'No need to take your things, everything is there'. The woman scolded us because we didn't bring our sleeping mats and blankets. We didn't dare talk back to her because she is a border supervisor, we all just cried. We talked to each other about how she thinks Karen people are lower class. She didn't scold the other nationalities [probably Burmans and Mons], only us. ... I was there for three months. They gave us food twice each day. ... They gave us a very tiny cup of rice with a small piece of

chicken for each person. It wasn't enough to eat, so we had to buy food from the shops. I took along 30,000 Kyats of my own money and it lasted me for the 3 months. Some of the single girls had to spend 40,000 or 50,000 Kyats. ... After I left the training I stayed in Po Hsi Mu for two more months. After that we couldn't stay anymore in Po Hsi Mu. The monthly pay from the government is 925 Kyats but I never got it. ... My husband never got his pay either, so we couldn't stay there. He came and stayed with me and taught in Po Hsi Mu, but he never got paid. The villagers gave us some food, but the government didn't give us any food.” - “Naw Ghay Wah” (F, 31), schoolteacher from Pa'an district who was ordered to move and become a teacher in Dooplaya after the SLORC occupation (Interview #4, 9/98)

Illness and Medical Care

“(M)any people are sick, they are coughing a lot. Some also have diarrhoea. They can't find any medicine. Two people have already died, a 2-year-old girl died ten days ago and another child died about a month ago. They both died of diarrhoea, which they'd had for almost two months. They wouldn't have died if they'd had medicine. In the past, children in Kyo G'Lee [area] who had medicine didn't die from this.” - “Pa Boh” (M, 38), K'Neh Thay Po Lay village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #9, 9/98)

Medical clinics formerly supported by various organisations and the KNU throughout Dooplaya have closed under the SPDC occupation, and very little medical help is available. Even in the central village of Saw Hta (Azin) there is no proper clinic; villagers there were forced to pay for the establishment of a clinic after the SPDC occupation and had to build it themselves, but even so they must pay to go there. There are no doctors there, only one or two Karen-speaking nurses, and villagers who go there have to buy their own medicines. The medicines are very expensive, and most people cannot afford to buy more than one or two tablets.

“In Saw Hta the Burmese collected money from the villagers to establish a hospital and then forced the villagers to build it. But when the villagers go to the hospital, when they're ill, they must pay. They don't have enough medicine. In Kalay Kee they also collected money to establish a hospital which the villagers then had to build, and there too the villagers must pay when they go to the hospital. The medics are army medics.” - “Saw Day Htoo” (M, 40), Kwih K'Baw village, central Dooplaya (Interview #5, 9/98)

“Our whole family was sick, my husband, my children and myself. Medicines were very expensive. We had to pay 15 Kyats for each capsule of penicillin. To take medicine just one time cost 40 or 50 Kyats, and if we had to take medicine 3 times a day we had to pay over 100 Kyats. We were living there in poverty, and if we'd stayed there any longer our children would have died and I would have died too. We all had malaria. ... Last year one of my children died in Po Hsi Mu. She was 4 years old and died of malaria. When she was sick I sent her to Saw Hta, but they don't do malaria tests there, they only treat wounded soldiers. There is no medicine for our children.

We have to buy that and treat them ourselves.” - “Naw Ghay Wah” (F, 31), schoolteacher from Pa’an district who was ordered to move and become a teacher in Dooplaya after the SLORC occupation (Interview #4, 9/98)

Outside of the main villages in central Dooplaya, people have no access to medical help or medicines whatsoever unless they risk a trip to Thailand. In the eastern ‘hump’ of Dooplaya, villagers say that they’ve already run out of money to buy medicines in Thailand so most people use roots and other herbal cures as their only medicines.

“(T)here are no clinics or doctors. If they are sick they grind the roots of trees to make medicine. Sometimes they go to buy medicine in Klaw Taw [a village just inside Thailand].” - “Saw Muh” (M, 36), Kyaw Plaw village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #11, 9/98)

“I cough all the time and there is no medicine or hospital. People here eat the roots of trees for medicine. Some are healed by the roots but others aren’t and remain ill.” - “Pu Tha Wah” (M, 66), Bo Kler Kee village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #13, 9/98)

No training is available for villagers who want to become medics, because the SPDC is afraid that they will use their skills to help KNLA soldiers. In August 1998, SPDC troops executed a 20-year-old Meh T’Lah villager named Maw Lu Bu because they caught him carrying some injection sets to treat the sick in his village. They shot him dead on suspicion of carrying medicine for KNLA soldiers.

“The Burmese had exchanged fire with the KNLA, but no villagers were injured. Then later they captured a villager on the path to Noh Pa Wah, and they saw some medicine in his bag so they shot him dead on the path. ... His name was Maw Lu Bu and he was about 20 years old. He wasn’t married yet. They shot him when I was back there, not even a month ago. They killed him near the pond between Meh T’Lah and Khaw Wah Kloh. They killed him just because they saw medicine in his bag.” - “Pu Bway Doh” (M, 82), Dta La Ku villager from Meh T’Lah village (Interview #8, 9/98)

Landmines

“His name was Paw Eh Pa. We did not know if it was a Burmese or KNLA landmine, but it was put on the way to Kwih Kler, near the top of the village. He went to his farm at 5 a.m. with his wife along the sandy path. His wife was walking in front of him when he stepped on the landmine. His wife was sprayed with sand and she dared not call to her husband. All that was left of her husband was his head, chest and one hand. His feet were found very far from where he died and his liver, intestines and stomach were destroyed. His left hand was wrapped in his sarong, and his right hand had disappeared. His slippers and torch were destroyed and pieces were spread everywhere. We think it was a Burmese landmine. I saw this all with my own eyes.” - “Saw Htoo Po” (M, 25), Meh T’Ler village, central Dooplaya (Interview #3, 9/98)

In areas like Dooplaya, the KNLA can only operate in small groups and are dependent for ammunition on very tenuous supply lines. To compensate for the imbalance in numbers, to harass the SPDC troops and to protect caches and supply lines, they are increasingly relying on landmines. Most of these mines are of their own design and manufacture, but quite effective. The SPDC responds by increasing their own use of landmines. The KNLA usually lays mines slightly off pathways, not in fields or just outside villages, and always tries to tell local villagers which pathways to avoid because they are mined. However, this is not always effective, particularly in areas where the KNLA cannot enter villages because the SPDC is based there. As proof of this, villagers continue to be blown up by KNLA mines. The SPDC lays its mines on pathways to farmfields and in other areas where villagers commonly go and never tells anyone where the mines are, making these especially dangerous. Landmines are not yet as much of a problem in Dooplaya as they are further north in Pa’an district, where they have become a major cause of fear and flight among the villagers [see *“Uncertainty, Fear and Flight: The Current Human Rights Situation in Eastern Pa’an District”* (KHRG #98-08, 18/11/98)], but they may become more of a problem as time goes on and they are already becoming an issue in the daily lives of the villagers in all parts of Dooplaya.

“Six villagers from Kyo G’Lee and one person from K’Neh Thay Po Lay were injured by Burmese landmines. The KNLA landmines haven’t hurt any villagers, but the Burmese plant landmines on the paths which lead to the farms and everywhere. They also plant them on the road. They don’t tell the villagers where the landmines are, which is why the villagers get injured by the landmines.” - “Saw Muh” (M, 36), Kyaw Plaw village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #11, 9/98)

“The KNLA tell [the villagers] where they have put their landmines, but the Burmese never tell us. Although many villagers die as a result of their landmines they still don’t tell us where they put them. Some people get hurt by their landmines when they go to their farms. Some people went fishing and got hurt by their landmines. They never tell the villagers. ... I know that one person from Kyaw Plaw died from a landmine and another had to have his leg amputated. ... His name is Ku Lu Po, he is 40 years old and has a wife and children. Another person died in the jungle, he was a Bo Kler

villager. That happened last summer.” - “Pu Eh Thee” (M, 68), Kyaw Plaw village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #12, 9/98)

In eastern Dooplaya the villagers are quite aware that there are many landmines around and many are afraid to go too far from their villages because of this. In central Dooplaya, there have been several reported cases this year of villagers being maimed or killed by landmines. It is not always clear which army laid the mine. One of the worst cases occurred on March 22nd 1998 near Kwih Kler in central Dooplaya. Pa Gaw Gu from Htaw Wah Law village was being forced to use his small truck to carry SPDC rations and was giving the family of Saw Po Dee a lift. The truck hit a vehicle mine (apparently planted by the KNLA) along the road and was blown apart. Saw Po Dee’s 6-year-old daughter was killed and all of the others were wounded.

“The Burmese were going to come to bring their rations, but instead they forced a villager who owned a car to take the rations to them. ... The car with 4 people in it from Htaw Wah Law village hit a landmine. The car had Saw Po Dee, his wife, Ma San San, from Kwih Kler village, his 6-year-old daughter and the driver, Pa Gaw Gu, inside. The car was carrying rice, chillies and beans for the Burmese, and these were spread everywhere after they hit the landmine. Their 6-year-old daughter died, I saw her brain had come out of her nose. If she hadn’t been shielded by the rice sacks her body would have been completely destroyed. His wife and the driver escaped out of the front of the car, but Saw Po Dee was thrown from the car and fell. His mouth was bleeding and he was bruised. The Burmese put him on an intravenous drip and then they forced a car from Kwih Kler to take him to Kyaikdon. His wife, whose eyes were swollen from crying, went with him. The Burmese took his daughter to the Burmese camp and covered her body. They didn’t allow people to see her but I had gone to see [the accident site] before they took her away and felt such pity for the girl.” - “Saw Htoo Po” (M, 25), Meh T’Ler village, central Dooplaya (Interview #3, 9/98)

Though there are not yet reports of SPDC troops systematically using porters as human minesweepers as they do in Pa’an district, this may be because villagers in Dooplaya are not yet aware enough of landmines to realise that this is what is happening when they are sent out in front of the military column. A few villagers have already referred in interviews to being sent out in front of the military column when they are portering. If the use of landmines continues, this will probably become a more common and systematic practice by SPDC troops.

“The Burmese knew the way but they made trouble for us and forced a villager to go in front of them. I think they were afraid. I’m not sure why, maybe they were afraid that the enemy would shoot at them.” - “Saw Htoo Po” (M, 25), Meh T’Ler village, central Dooplaya, describing his experiences while portering (Interview #3, 9/98)

“No one has stepped on landmines recently, but in May my cousin Saw Lay Htoo, Ka Lu Po, Naw Kyaw Ta and Mu Dwaw stepped on a Burmese landmine in Kyo G’Lee village. Ka Lu Po died immediately and Saw Lay Htoo died later in the Mae Sot hospital [in Thailand]. The other two only sustained injuries. Saw Lay Htoo was 33

years old. He was married with two children but one of his children had already died. A landmine exploded in K'Neh Thay Po Lay village after I was arrested [in June] and injured one of my uncles, Pa Haw. People carried him to Kyo G'Lee village and the Burmese injected him with medicine but he died soon after. He was 50 years old and had a wife and children. Nobody goes to their farms on that path anymore, people must take a different path, a car road. The Burmese put landmines on the paths, beside the paths and on the oxcart tracks.” - “Pa Boh” (M, 38), K'Neh Thay Po Lay village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #9, 9/98)

Future of the Area

“Things are getting more difficult every day. Even the Burmese leaders capture each other and put each other in jail. If they can capture and imprison even the people who have authority, then how are the villagers supposed to tolerate them? That’s why the villagers are fleeing from Burma.” - “Pa Bway Htoo” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder (Interview #6, 9/98)

The SPDC is without doubt determined to continue consolidating its control over all of Dooplaya district. As this occurs it will carry the usual byproducts of SPDC control for the villagers: increasingly systematic extortion of food and money, standing orders for rotating forced labour of various kinds, and forced labour on infrastructure, Army farms and money-spinning projects for local battalions. The KNLA is likely to continue its small-scale guerrilla activities throughout the region, and this will likely cause the SPDC to continue the sporadic forced relocations of villages, arrest and detention of suspected KNLA collaborators, and tight restrictions on the access of farmers to their fields. As the struggle continues, the KNLA may become more reliant on landmines and the SPDC may respond by doing the same and by taking more porters as human minesweepers, as their troops already do in Pa’an district.

“Even if the KNLA gives them all of their weapons there will be no peace at all. They cannot give us peace because they have persecuted us from the beginning. The Burmese can lie about many things. If the KNLA give them all of their weapons, they will still persecute the Karen people. They will continue to force them to carry things like rice and ammunition. They will also continue to beat them and force them to dig mud for road construction.” - “Saw Muh” (M, 36), Kyaw Plaw village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #11, 9/98)

“If there is no KNLA maybe the Burmese would persecute the Karen people. Look, they stayed far from the village but they came here, it is a long distance from their place. They didn’t do anything to us because the KNLA are nearby, but if there were no KNLA they would do whatever they want to us. If you look at the people from the lowlands, they are oppressed, beaten, persecuted and killed by the Burmese often.” - “Pu Eh Thee” (M, 68), Kyaw Plaw village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #12, 9/98)

The DKBA and the KPA are an uncertain factor in the future of Dooplaya. It remains to be seen whether the KPA will succeed in becoming a major player in the district, or whether they are marginalised by the SPDC and/or the DKBA. The initial question is whether the current reappearance of DKBA troops in northern and central Dooplaya will be expanded to cover areas further south in the district, and how many DKBA troops will be involved.

The situation will likely become increasingly difficult for the villagers who are currently internally displaced in central and southern Dooplaya, until they may have to choose between fleeing for Thailand or returning to SPDC control in their villages. If extortion and forced labour continue to become more systematic in the villages, it can be expected

that more villagers will flee to become internally displaced or to head for Noh Po refugee camp in Thailand. Currently it is very hard for new refugees to gain admittance to the refugee camp, because the Thai authorities state that all new refugees are to be forced back unless they are “fleeing from fighting”. Many new arrivals will probably be forcibly repatriated on arrival. The Dta La Ku people are facing an especially difficult situation, and may spend much of the near future running back and forth across the Thai border.

“I can’t do anything. I think that I would have to stay because I’m very old but I’m not sure if I would be able to stay. I don’t know if the young people will dare to stay or not. If they don’t dare to stay they can run. As for me, I’m very old and cannot run, if they want to kill me then let them kill me.” - “Pu Eh Thee” (M, 68), Kyaw Plaw village, eastern Dooplaya, discussing what he will do if the SPDC troops return to his village (Interview #12, 9/98)

“If the Thai Army forces us back we go back to our villages, if the Burmese Army makes trouble for us we come here [Thailand]. All the Dta La Ku people plan to flee and come here because when we asked the Burmese commander to allow us to be exempt from being porters, because it is against our religion, the Burmese said that the Dta La Ku people are troublemakers and they should leave Burma.” - “Saw Meh Doh” (M, 44), Dta La Ku elder from Kwih Lat Der village, southern Dooplaya (Interview #K4, 9/98)

According to villagers within Dooplaya, the SPDC may be planning to use either the DKBA or the KPA to attack Noh Po refugee camp over the coming dry season. SPDC patrols already made repeated incursions into Thailand in March 1998 to test out the Thai defences, but stopped short of actually attacking the camp. If an attack comes, it is difficult to predict whether Thai forces will defend the camp, or abandon it to be destroyed as they have done with other refugee camps. They have already stated that at some point in the near future they want to move the camp to another site further north, possibly consolidating it with other existing refugee camps. If so, they may allow it to be destroyed as a way of coercing the refugees to move to a new site. However, if the camp does move it will be far from refugee crossing points, thus making it even more difficult for villagers in Dooplaya to escape the complete control of the SPDC.

“...we have to stay and die if the Burmese come because we have no place to run to. If they persecute and kill us we will have to suffer, but if they don’t kill us we can live. If we run away our food will not follow us. When we ran away last time we felt bad that our rice was still in the village. When I first came back it was only myself and my youngest son, the others didn’t come back. I came back and I stayed here. Later, I heard a dog barking and I saw many Burmese soldiers. They called me to come down from my house. Then they went into my house and took all that they wanted, such as my clothes and blankets. I don’t know if the others will run or not but I’ve heard them say that they don’t know where to run either. We don’t want to stay in another country.” - “Pu Tha Wah” (M, 66), Bo Kler Kee village, eastern Dooplaya (Interview #13, 9/98)

“I worked in my village but I couldn’t get any support. Burma is our country but nobody there treats us fairly when we work. When my children got sick, I had to buy medicine for them in the shop and treat them myself. When I stayed in Po Hsi Mu for the last two months I spent over 10,000 Kyats that way, and I realised I could not stay like that anymore. If I’d stayed there much longer my children would have died there, we all would have died there.” - “Naw Ghay Wah” (F, 31), schoolteacher from Pa’an district who was ordered to move and become a teacher in Dooplaya after the SLORC occupation (Interview #4, 9/98)

“I would like to say that if the situation is good in the future I will tell you about the good things, but if the situation is bad I will tell you about the bad things. What I have told you is true and I hope that the situation will be better in the future. Now we villagers have difficult lives because the SPDC persecutes us. I would like to ask the foreign countries to please help us and to do whatever they can as soon as possible.” - “Saw Win Than” (M, 50), Wah P’Theh village, southern Dooplaya (Interview #2, 4/98)

Selected Interviews

Following are the texts of ten of the interviews with villagers which were used as a basis for this report, out of a total of close to 30 interviews which were conducted. The interview numbers correspond to those used above in the first part of the report. Interviews #11-16, which are quoted above, are not included here for reasons of brevity.

NAME: “Ko Sein Aung” **#1.** **SEX:** M **AGE:** 21
Mon/Karen carpenter
FAMILY: Married with 1 child aged 5 months
ADDRESS: Saw Hta village, central Dooplaya district **INTERVIEWED:**
9/98

[“Ko Sein Aung” was interviewed a month after fleeing to Thailand as a refugee.]

Q: When did you arrive here?

A: I arrived here on August 24th, 1998. I came here with my family, my sister and my parents-in-law, 7 people all together.

Q: Why did you come here?

A: I do not want to be a porter anymore so I came here. Each time I went to porter for 2 or 3 days and then I returned and rested for 2 or 3 days. They forced me to arrive at Meh Kwih village at 4 p.m. and then I was free to go. At that time it was rainy and dark so I returned with my friend and we arrived back in our village at about 3 or 4 a.m. I just slept a few minutes. In the morning, they forced the villagers to go to porter again. I thought they wouldn't force me because I had gone the day before but then they forced me to go again. I didn't have time to do my own work. The Burmese also forced me to be a porter another time. In the evening at 8:30 p.m., when the villagers were watching a movie, they entered the place where we were watching the video. They told the men to be porters. We didn't dare flee. They collected 10 to 20 villagers to porter from each village, over 200 villagers at a time altogether. The villagers came from Dta Ray Kee, Tee Wah Klay, Meh K'Dtee, Taw T'Naw Kee, Lay Po Kee, Kyaw Kee, Tee Meh Baw, Kaser Po Kler, Meh Tha Ler, Kwih Kler, Dta Nay Pya and Po Hsi Mu villages. I didn't want to stay there anymore so I came here.

Q: How did you flee?

A: We talked to each other before we fled. We knew that the Burmese soldiers were going to travel for many days *[with them as porters]* so one day early in the morning, before dawn, we fled. There were many groups of us. In our group we had more than 20 porters. There were only 4 porters from Saw Hta and one or two porters from Tee Wah Klay left behind with the Burmese soldiers. We crossed through the bushes and villages. We slept one night in Tee Wah Doh Kee village and one night in Lay Po and then I arrived in Saw Hta.

Q: How long did it take you to come here from Saw Hta?

A: I left Saw Hta at 8 a.m. and arrived at Ber Kler *[at the Thai border]* at 3 or 4 p.m. It took a long time because there were children and they walked slowly. We stayed one night in Ber Kler and then the next day we took the line bus in the morning to come here. When we left Saw Hta, they asked me, "Where are you going?" I said, "I will go to Ber Kler to visit my grandmother." They let us go but I couldn't bring anything. I could only take one blanket and some clothes. If we had brought many things the Burmese would have known that we were coming to stay here and they wouldn't have let us go. They would have forced us back to the village. If you go to visit another village you must get a pass. It costs 50 Kyats for one letter. I had to get 3 letters for 50 Kyats each which said we could go to Ber Kler for 5 days. If we'd only got one letter we were worried they would know that we were travelling together. *[They don't want to let an entire family leave together because then there is no way to force them to come back.]*

Q: When you went portering, what did they force you to carry?

A: We had to follow a few soldiers. I had to carry rice and there were G3 bullets together with the rice, it weighed about 18 viss *[29 kg / 64 pounds]*. Sometimes I had to carry their bags and pots. We had to carry things to Kyun Chaung *[southern Dooplaya]* and Ler Theh Wee. We walked for 5 days on the way to Kyun Chaung. They only rested at 6 or 7 p.m., sometimes 10 p.m. They started going at 6 a.m. I also had to go to places like Tee Wah Doh Kee, Meh T'Kreh, Dta Gu Chaung and Po Lu Dweh. Some porters had to carry big shells. My shoulders were bruised, as were the shoulders of all the porters. Some porters were crying. A villager named Po Thu Daw, who was over 45 years old, was crying. The youngest porter was 16 or 17 years old. I was a porter for 18 days, then I fled from them at Kyun Chaung. 4 or 5 porters from Saw Hta village are left with them and the rest of us fled.

Q: What did they do to the villagers who didn't go for portering?

A: They collected their names and when Burmese were going to go the next time they forced them to go. Everyone must go. However, the villagers who had money could hire a porter *[to go in their place]*.

Q: Did they beat or kick the porters?

A: Yes, I saw that. A porter from Meh T'Kreh fled but the Burmese captured him again and beat him. The Burmese beat him many times and kicked him until he fell down. When I saw that, I took great pity on him. The Burmese beat him with a bamboo stick and he shouted very loudly. The stick was as thick as a big toe - some that they use are as thick as knife handles. The bamboo was already dry, and the Burmese beat his back, "boan, boan!" *[imitating the sound of the beating]*. His back became so swollen that we couldn't stand to look at him. He wasn't able to carry anything so the Burmese left him on the path. He was able to return to the village as we were not far from the village. Three porters from Saw Hta were sick with malaria and they were left behind also. The Burmese said nothing to them. They were Aye Thay, Maung Ni and one porter from Tee Wah Klay village whose name I don't know.

Q: Did the Burmese give food to the porters?

A: They gave us rice and salt twice a day but there wasn't enough so we had to eat quickly - those who ate quickly got more. If you eat slowly, you don't get enough. Sometimes we saw banana trees in the jungle and we cooked them into soup or we ate them like vegetables [*raw; the core of the banana tree stem is often used as a vegetable*]. If we saw water on the way, we drank it. The soldiers ate the same things we did but they ate well.

Q: How did you sleep?

A: We slept on the ground. They didn't allow us to go out [*of the guarded area*].

Q: When they were forcing you to porter, did they say anything to you?

A: Yes, they said to us, "Nga Lo Ma Tha!" [*"I fucked your mother and you are the child!"*, an extremely rude Burmese curse], "Kway Ma Tha!" [*"Son of a bitch!"*], and "You are a lazy porter and if I kick you, you'll go flying!"

Q: Did you have to be a porter again after that?

A: Yes, but I didn't have to go so far. I only had to go for 2 or 3 days. I had to carry ammunition near Saw Hta village.

Q: Do you know their battalion number?

A: They were from [*Division*] 22, [*Infantry*] Battalion #230. Their Company Commander's name is Aung Kyaing. Their camp is in Saw Hta village, above the church. It's about a 15 minute walk from my village to their camp. They call their camp Byu Ha Gone [*Tactical Command Hill*].

Q: Did they eat the villagers' pigs or chickens?

A: Yes. They also picked the villagers' fruit.

Q: Do they tax the villagers?

A: Yes. When they came in the hot season last year, they came with a bulldozer. They told the villagers how much food they had eaten in town and the cost of the fuel [*for the bulldozer*] and demanded that we pay for it. The Saw Hta villagers had to pay 100,000 [*Kyat*]. There are over 200 houses in Saw Hta village, and they came to collect taxes whenever they wanted. They taxed us once a month, but sometimes we had to pay twice a month. I have little money so I was only taxed 500 Kyats. Richer villagers had to pay 2 to 4 thousand Kyats [*each time*]. I suffered from having to porter and from paying the taxes of 500 Kyats. Each house had to pay that much. Those villagers who couldn't give 500 Kyats were ordered to give 300 Kyats and those who couldn't afford that had to spend a day and night in the stocks in the police jail. Some villagers went to do daily labour which paid 400 Kyats and then gave that to the Burmese.

Q: Did any villagers have to do forced labour?

A: Yes. The Division 22 soldiers forced the men to clear and dig the road, and to dig for the Signal Corps as well. The villagers had to build a fence around their Army camp and lay stones in the village. Women didn't have to labour. The men had to go every Saturday after breakfast for half the day, and food wasn't provided. They had to do work

both in the village and in their [Army] camp, wherever they ordered the villagers to work. If one day I went for forced labour [on a road or Army camp], the next day I had to go to do sentry duty and then the next day I had to be a porter. Then they forced me to labour [on the road or Army camp] again. Villagers who had fields to take care of had to hire workers to porter or labour in their place. It cost 400 Kyats per day. The workers were usually hired through the whole rainy season [i.e. the rice growing season]. We took rests behind the backs of the Burmese, but we wouldn't dare rest in front of them because they would yell at us. They would say, "Nga Lo Ma Tha! If we order you to work but you rest all the time how will the job get done?" But they didn't beat the labourers.

Q: What did they do to the villagers who didn't go to do forced labour?

A: The police came to get them and they were forced to work at the village police station. They had to clear in front of the station and dig out the stumps.

Q: Did you ever see them torture villagers in the village?

A: I haven't seen that, but after they came to the village [they arrived in early 1997] two women were raped by soldiers. One of the women was Wah Bu's wife. She is 30 to 40 years old. She was raped not so long ago, last year [1997] during Christmas time, after the rape of the other woman. Most people went to the Christmas [celebration], including her husband, but a few people didn't go. The villagers saw a soldier from Division 22 entering the village but nobody dared go near him. He raped the woman at knife point. She was too afraid to shout. The soldier forced her to suck his penis. Then he left the house and the woman told the villagers in the village. The next morning, his commander bound him and beat him and then he was released.

Q: Who is the other woman the soldiers raped?

A: The other woman's name is Naw Par Lae, she is about 20 years old. The soldier, Zaw Win Htut of Division 44, came in the night when all the children were sleeping. Her husband was out visiting another house. He raped her at gunpoint. He didn't allow the village headman to go tell their commander, but she went to tell the commander and he sent the soldier to prison.

Q: When did Division 44 come to the village?

A: They came to the village about a year and five months ago, before the Burmese water festival last year [April 1997; they came in February/March 1997]. They came before Division 22 came. They always stayed in the village. They came to buy bread and demand chickens from the villagers. If the villagers didn't give them chickens they fired their guns. They were very quiet when they went to shoot the chickens, they fired their guns slowly [i.e. if the villagers wouldn't give them chickens they would go secretly and shoot the chickens one by one when the villagers wouldn't see them]. They only shot the chickens. We kept the pigs in pig pens so they didn't shoot them. When they came to the village we couldn't dare keep the cattle outside. If we let them outside they shot them and ate them. They never paid for the animals they ate. The villagers were afraid to complain to the commander. Whenever the villagers told him he said, "I have many soldiers, I can't watch them all."

Q: When Division 44 came to the village, did they force the villagers to porter?

A: The villagers were forced to porter and to do other labour. At that time it was the hot season [*March-May 1997*] so the villagers were forced to prevent and combat forest fires. Some of the Burmese stayed in the village and some were just outside the village in some small huts. They also built a pagoda outside Saw Hta village and stayed there. They ate the villagers' pigs and chickens and sometimes shot birds with their slingshots or cut down small bamboo trees in the jungle. If they saw us they asked if we had seen the KNLA. We always said no.

Q: Did you see them shoot and kill anyone?

A: No, but I saw them arrest villagers that they saw in the jungle and make them follow them to the front line.

Q: What did you do in your village?

A: I carved canoes. I earned 400 Kyats per day. Sometimes I worked in the sawmill for 400 Kyats per day if I wasn't carving canoes. My boss was a Saw Hta villager called U Ba Kyaw. He didn't provide food, we had to eat our own but our pay was enough. We had to buy rice, 1,200 Kyats for a big tin. Sometimes we couldn't find any rice to buy, so if we had enough money we tried to buy one or two big tins of rice at a time [*one big tin is about 17 kg/38 lb*]. I never had fishpaste, I only had salt and chillies. I didn't dare farm alone in the jungle.

Q: Are there villagers staying in your village now?

A: Yes. The villagers in Kaser Po Kler also came to stay in Saw Hta. They didn't dare stay in Kaser Po Kler any longer because the Burmese were forcing them to stay right in the village so they were afraid. The Burmese aren't forcing people to relocation sites but they don't allow the villagers to stay outside the villages or in their farmfield huts. They force them back to stay in the village. [*The Kaser Po Kler villagers were not allowed to go to their fields and had to move into the centre of their village, so they fled to Saw Hta.*]

Q: Now where are your parents?

A: They are in Saw Hta. They rear a few pigs. They have an ox-cart which they must use to transport things for the Burmese. They go in the morning and return in the evening. They are forced to go long distances to Kho Toh Ler Taw [*in the west*] - it's too far to walk. They are also forced to go to Kwih Kler and Ber Kler. They must go for forced labour all the time.

Q: Are there any DKBA staying in the village?

A: Now they are not in the village. When we came here, the DKBA were staying in Kyaikdon. They are staying in a different place than the Burmese because they just arrived from the lower plains [*the west*]. I heard that from other villagers. I don't know how many DKBA soldiers are there, but there are approximately 3 to 4 hundred Burmese soldiers from Division 22.

Q: Now what do you do?

A: Last night I went to do sentry duty [*at the refugee camp; the refugees watch for attacks on the camp to sound the alarm because Thai soldiers never protect the refugee camps*]. Some people have gone back to their village so I am staying in their house with my wife and child. We are all sick, we have colds.

Q: When you stayed in your village, where did you go for treatment when you were sick?

A: We went to the hospital. The hospital has no doctor, only a nurse named Maung Gyi. He is a Karen nurse for the villagers that the Burmese allow us to go and see. Sometimes he buys medicine from Ber Kler and sometimes he buys it from the lower places [*the west*] and then we can buy it. The more serious cases that he can't treat, he sends here. Some patients are sent to the lower places, Tha Ma Nya and Seik Gyi.

Q: What is the difference between your village and here?

A: When I stayed in my village I had to do forced labour and portering. Moreover, we didn't have enough food. Sometimes I thought I didn't want to live anymore.

Q: Do you know of anyone who came here who has gone back?

A: Yes, but they don't stay close to the Burmese. They stay about an hour's walk away. If the Burmese find them and they cannot explain why they are there, they will beat them. Nobody dares tell them they're there.

Q: If the situation is good, will you go back?

A: If everybody goes, I will go. If the Burmese do not leave, I will not go back. After I came to stay here the Burmese went to ask my parents about me many times. They asked, "Where is your son-in-law?" My parents said, "He went to Ber Kler to see the doctor." They asked one or two times a day. The village headman, U P---, also went to ask about me. When we left the village my parents didn't know. Now they know, but they wouldn't dare tell the Burmese. If the Burmese knew we came here and then we returned, they would torture us and we would have to go as porters.

#2.

NAME: "Saw Win Than"
Karen Christian farmer
SEX: M **AGE:** 50
ADDRESS: Wah P'Theh village, southern Dooplaya district
INTERVIEWED: 4/98

[When interviewed, "Saw Win Than" was internally displaced, hiding in the hills at the source of a stream.]

Q: How many houses are there in Meh Za Lee riverside village?

A: Including people from the village, the fields and from south of the river, there are over 40 households. Now the people are in the village living as farmers and villagers. I was elected as an area leader and have been doing that for 3 years, including this year.

Q: Do the Burmese come to your place often?

A: The Burmese have only come twice this year. They always come to find Karen soldiers. They didn't do anything to us because we didn't do anything against them. However, this last time they took away the villagers' belongings because they had met and fought the Karen soldiers. This year it is very difficult for people to work because the Burmese soldiers threaten to relocate our village. The people living far from the village *[in their fields distant from the village]* fled to the border refugee camp because the SPDC forced them to serve as porters too often. As for us, we're not sure if we're going to have to relocate or not. Our situation now isn't as good as in other years. In the past it was easy for me to work, but this year I don't have enough food even though I have been working as hard as the years before. Many people who were fleeing from portering or forced labour and heading to the refugee camps have stopped at my house along the way, and I had to share what I had with them. That is why I don't have enough rice and food for this year. I don't know where to go or what to do.

Q: When did the Burmese come to your village this year?

A: In the first week of May *[1997]* 80 to 100 SPDC soldiers came from Moulmein and headed to Three Pagodas Pass patrolling the whole area. They were staying in the village at 2 p.m. when they came across Karen soldiers at the monastery in our village. A battle occurred and when they shot at each other, the KNLA were worried about the villagers because it was happening in the village so they ran away and escaped. The SPDC had been going from Waw Raw Kee area to B'Naw Kleh Kee. After that they slept beside the source of the Meh Za Lee river for a night and continued on in the morning. When they were walking they saw some villagers coming from B'Naw Kleh Kee going to their farms. They captured and interrogated them. The villagers told them that they were coming from B'Naw Kleh Kee to go to their farms, but they didn't believe them. They asked the villagers many questions and the villagers were very afraid. They took the villagers to B'Naw Kleh Kee village, which is about 8 or 9 miles from my village, and interrogated them. There were two fools *[mentally handicapped]* among the villagers. I heard the two foolish people, Kyaw Win and Dah Lay, a farmer, who were very afraid, tell the soldiers that 2 villagers had weapons and were Karen soldiers. Therefore the two

villagers, Pah Ta Kyaw and Saw Wah Si, were badly beaten. They were both married and from B’Naw Kleh Kee village.

Q: Where did they beat the people?

A: The foolish men told them that the two villagers from B’Naw Kleh Kee were Karen soldiers but they weren’t. The Burmese covered both of them separately with gunny bags and covered their heads with plastic bags. When both of their bodies were covered they beat them. They beat them with rods that I think were as wide as my hand. I think they were that big because the porters who were there told me that the beating sounded like a coconut falling from a tree to the ground. We heard the sound, *tu! tu!* when they were beating them. They beat their bodies only, like their backs and buttocks. They were not bleeding but they were badly swollen and in a lot of pain; but their heads were not beaten. They beat them until they were satisfied. The man who came and told me about that couldn’t see very well because it was night time, 12 midnight.

Q: How were they finally set free?

A: People from other villages vouched for those two people. They said, “The person who accused them is a foolish man. If you believe him then we will all die!” Then they were set free.

Q: What about the two foolish men?

A: They were given food and ate properly. The Burmese kept them captive for 3 days and interrogated them but didn’t beat them. They beat other people because they believed the 2 foolish people.

Q: Were you staying in the village when they came to Meh Za Lee village?

A: At that time we dared to live in the village because we were simple villagers, we welcomed them politely but in fear. However, during the battle the villagers ran away because they were afraid of the sounds. The Burmese took things such as handmade [*hunting*] guns, gold earrings, knives and pots from 11 houses which were near the battlefield. My house was one of them. They took everything, the cost of which was about 20,000 Kyats. We didn’t have any animals for them to take because the place where we lived was used for religious purposes and so we didn’t rear animals.

Q: Did the Burmese ever rape any women?

A: Last rainy season, in July or August of last year [*1997*], they came to a place far below our place. A person told me that they raped a girl then but I don’t know her name. She was single and about 16 or 18 years old. The soldiers went to the girl at night in the middle of many sleeping people, including her parents who saw them. Many people slept together because they were afraid but nobody dared to say anything when she was caught because they were afraid the Burmese would hit them. There were two men, and one covered her mouth while the other held her arms and they carried her down to the bushes just at the edge of the village. We don’t know how many people were at the place where she was raped so it may have been more than just the two of them who raped her. She tried to shout but she couldn’t make any noise because they had covered her mouth. They raped her for 2 hours. When they were finished they set her free and she came

back. Her face looked like she wanted to cry but she couldn't cry or smile. She covered herself with a blanket until morning because she was ashamed. After that the girl didn't dare say anything about what she had suffered because she felt shy and afraid the soldiers would kill her if she told people they'd raped her.

In August of last year [1997], about the same time that the soldiers raped the girl, Division 22 went down to Klay Thu village and arrested 2 village headmen. They beat them and one of them died. The one who didn't die was 30 years old and the one who died was 50 years old. They questioned him and accused him of not answering truthfully. I'm sure he told the truth every time they asked about the KNLA. At about 10 p.m. they beat 6 people but only that village headman was seriously hurt, the rest were farmers. They tied their hands tightly behind their backs and kicked them, beat them and shot them with slingshots many times. Four people, a corporal and 3 soldiers, took turns beating them. They beat them with bamboo as thick as my wrist. They kicked their heads, backs and stomachs with jungle boots until they couldn't breathe. When they stopped breathing they stopped for a moment to wait until they breathed again and then continued beating them. The village in which the people were beaten is about 8 miles from my village but I was there. I saw it happen from a distance but was afraid to go near them. They beat them for 2 hours until they were satisfied and then let them go. They said to them, "Commit this to your memory. This is the price for not telling us the truth when we ask you questions."

The village headman [*the 50 year old headman*] was sent to the hospital near Ler Mer but the hospital said he was too badly injured and they couldn't help him. They sent him back to his house and he died there.

Q: Did anybody carry on the duties of the village headman after him?

A: The villagers were afraid to carry on the duties of the village headman because they were afraid that they would be beaten. However, the villagers elected an old village headman named Hla Thaug.

Q: What happened after they beat the B'Naw Kleh Kee villagers [*in May 1997 (see above)*]?

A: A long time after they beat the villagers in B'Naw Kleh Kee the same troops realised one of their friends had disappeared while they were travelling because he had injured his foot while he was with his column. Angrily, they went out in the dark [*looking for him*]. They couldn't find their friend and weren't sure how he got lost. They thought a villager may have done something bad to their friend. They searched through the night, so they didn't have enough time to sleep. When they arrived at Deh Khaw Kee, which is a 5 hour walk from B'Naw Kleh Kee in the direction of Waw Raw Kee, they came across 3 KNLA soldiers. The SPDC soldiers shot at them but didn't hit them and the KNLA soldiers ran away. The villagers were afraid and didn't know where to stay. A woman was coming back from her farm at about 1 p.m. The soldiers shouted at her and she responded, "I'm a good person! I'm a good person!" They didn't care what she said and started shooting at her. They shot with 4 or 5 guns. She ran behind a coconut tree and wasn't hit. She ran to her house and the soldiers followed her there. They shot her dead

at her house. She was shot once in her chest and once in her head. She was about 20 years old and pregnant when she died, her husband was about 23 years old.

Q: What was her husband doing when she was shot?

A: He was preparing himself with 5 or 6 friends to go to a wedding party in the village. They hadn't heard that the Burmese had come to the village. They suddenly heard the sound of guns and gathered themselves together. After the sound of the guns had subsided for a while, the Burmese soldiers surrounded their house, shouted, and began firing without any questions. There were 3 houses at that place. Her husband ran to find out what was happening and they shot him and broke two bones in his wrist but he didn't die.

Q: Why didn't they kill him?

A: Maybe they had pity on him because he shouted when he was hurt. Then the soldiers who killed his wife went back and told their commander that the woman was returning from her farm and was shot dead during the fight with the KNLA. They said her husband had also broken his hand then. They were afraid to tell their commander the truth.

Q: When did that happen?

A: Just 4 days ago [*March 30, 1998*]. I was in the village at the time and heard the shots. We heard her [*shouting*] but we dared not go to her because we were afraid. Finally, the soldiers found their friend they had lost. A villager had been looking after him and dressing his injured foot. They sent him to the commander because they had been worried that the KNLA had seen him and shot him. They didn't do anything to the other villagers. After they killed the woman and found their friend they thanked the villagers and went back. Unfortunately an innocent woman had to die before he returned.

Q: Did the SPDC ever order villagers in your area to relocate?

A: They haven't ordered us to relocate yet, but they have already relocated villagers from below our place [*downstream*] to places near their camps alongside the road. I know of 3 villages that have been relocated. Wah Pa Theh and Gru Mer were relocated to Gker [*a.k.a. Beh Hla Mu*], and Way T'Lay was relocated to Kaneh Kamaw. There is no Burmese camp in Gker but their village headman thought that Gker would be a reasonable place to relocate to. The name of the Burmese camp is San Pyah. Their soldiers often have to go to the front line so sometimes there are 50 soldiers in their camp and other times there are only 15 soldiers. They rotate their troops often.

Q: Did the SPDC soldiers ever send a letter to your place?

A: They once sent a letter to the village below us called Kwih K'Saw Si village, which is near Lay Noh. They are now living on the road to Lay Noh. They wrote a letter to Kwih K'Saw Si which said, "If you don't relocate in 7 days we will burn down your village and persecute the villagers." They didn't say where to go, they just demanded that they not stay in their village any more. All the Kwih K'Saw villagers left their village when they received the letter and went to wherever their relatives were living. They couldn't stay in their village any longer because the Burmese accused them of aiding the KNU, because

their village was near the place where the Karen soldiers were. That's why they forced them to move to another place.

Q: Do the Burmese force the villagers to work on the road?

A: Because we are so far from the road, we aren't forced to do road construction. They forced the villagers from below our village to work on the road and to build a fence around their camp with the villagers' own bamboo. The road was not far from their village, so they could go and come back in one day. They order 20 or 30 people from each village to go to work and there are many villages, so there are many people working. They don't force them to work for a certain amount of time, instead they force them to finish a certain amount of road. They have to dig and carry mud. They usually have to work for about 7 days and bring their own food. It is that way for every village. The road is called the Tavoy road. It leads to Tavoy and Thanbyuzayat. [*It is the Ye-Thanbyuzayat section of the main north-south coastal road.*] I think it is finished now so they may not have to go anymore.

Q: Do the Burmese give them water when they're thirsty?

A: They can drink water from the stream nearby. They dug a small well beside the stream to get drinking water because the Burmese never allow them to go far away. They have to eat and drink in the same place as where they urinate and defecate. The soldiers guard the villagers while they're working because they're afraid that the villagers will escape. If the villagers feel weak the soldiers give them medicine.

Q: Do the Burmese collect taxes in your place?

A: In my village they don't collect taxes, but my friend who had to relocate has to pay 1,000 Kyats each week for porter fees. They demand porters once a week. People who can't go must pay 1,000 Kyats, and those who can go must go. All of my friends below here, near the car road which is about 9 miles [*14.5 km*] from my place, have to porter. They were in the same village as me before I left to come here to farm. Because I'm far from the car road now, I don't have to serve as a porter.

Q: Do the SPDC give them enough food while they are portering?

A: No, they have to work while they're hungry. Sometimes they don't have a chance to eat if the soldiers hear information about their enemies. They have to carry rice and the chickens that the soldiers steal during the night. They also steal goats and pigs and never pay for them. The villagers don't say anything because they're afraid and they think that giving the Burmese what they want is better than being persecuted and killed. They steal the rice from the villagers' farmfield huts which are far from the village and they eat that together with all the chickens. Sometimes they give meat to the porters who are right near where they're cooking, but porters who are sitting further away get nothing. The villagers have to suffer many kinds of poverty.

Q: Do you think the Burmese will come again to your village?

A: They told the villagers that they will come again to clear the place [*of Karen soldiers*] because they said that when they came before they didn't clear the place completely. If

they come again we will not run away, because we are just villagers. We will become theirs, because we can't find any safe place to settle down.

I would like to say that if the situation is good in the future I will tell you about the good things, but if the situation is bad I will tell you about the bad things. What I have told you is true and I hope that the situation will be better in the future. Now we villagers have difficult lives because the SPDC persecutes us. I would like to ask the foreign countries to please help us and to do whatever they can as soon as possible.

#3.

NAME: "Saw Htoo Po"
Karen Dta La Ku farmer
SEX: M
AGE: 25
FAMILY: Married
ADDRESS: Meh T'Ler village, central Dooplaya district
9/98
INTERVIEWED:

["Saw Htoo Po" was a Christian but converted to Dta La Ku religion after his marriage. He was interviewed after arriving in a refugee camp in Thailand.]

Q: Why did you come here?

A: I came to visit my mother and father who are living here and to get treatment. I was sick for 7 days and nights and my fever didn't go down. I had malaria and was very tired, and I couldn't eat. I wanted to drink Sprite but I had no money to buy it. I owe 200 Kyats to other villagers and when I go back I must return it to them. When I arrived here, I took medicine and had an injection and the fever went down.

Q: Where is your village?

A: I was staying in Meh T'Ler and the area was under the control of the KNU. The Burmese had never come at that point. We helped the KNU if they demanded it of us but there weren't many problems and the work was easy. Two years ago I got married, and then a year later [*in March 1997*] the Burmese, Division 44, came to the village and took everything they saw and all the materials they could use. Most of the villagers had fled before they arrived because they were afraid, so we didn't even see the Burmese. Some villagers went to Myaing Gyi Ngu, which is under the control of the DKBA, some fled to K'Hee Pa Leh [*a roadside in Thailand where many refugees took initial shelter in 1997*] and some fled and came here. Because I was married, I fled to Lay Taw Ko [*a Dta La Ku village in Thailand; his wife is Dta La Ku*]. Before, there were 40 houses in our village but now only a few families have gone back to stay there.

Q: Why were the villagers afraid of the Burmese troops?

A: Because we thought they would beat, kill and harm us and we couldn't bear that so we ran away. The people from our village had never seen the Burmese before, but the villagers from Mo Kee and Noh Kyaw had been tortured by the Burmese. When they came to Kwih Kler, they told us point by point how the Burmese soldiers had persecuted and harmed them. So when Division 44 was getting close, most of the villagers fled from

their villages. There were only a few villagers left in our village. The village headman, L---, was among them. Those few could speak Burmese well so they dared to stay, but the others didn't dare stay. No more than 10 households stayed in the village. Some villagers fled to the east and escaped, but all the villagers who fled to the west were caught and arrested by the Burmese. The Burmese forced the villagers they had arrested to show them the secret hiding places of other villagers. Then the Burmese knew all of our secret places.

Q: Later how did they treat the villagers?

A: They didn't beat the villagers but any time they called us we had to go, day or night. Our wives were left alone in their houses [*all the men were called to forced labour*]. Everybody had to be cautious because they were worried that the Burmese would rape the women. The village headman warned the women not to go anywhere alone and to be careful.

Q: Did they arrest the villagers to be porters?

A: No, they didn't arrest [*round up*] the villagers to be porters, but if they saw us they ordered us to go. If we didn't go we were afraid they would have persecuted us. The porters were forced to go many places in the night. I had to porter, but that was after I had already fled to Kwih Lat Der village. I left Meh T'Ler and went to Kwih Kler. In Kwih Kler village the Burmese collected the names of all the people in each house and numbered the houses. They told us that if we had any problems they would help us. However, even when we had real problems they didn't help us, instead they forced us to help them. They forced us to do many things until we couldn't bear it any longer and we escaped to Kwih Lat Der village. From Kwih Kler we went through Meh Naw Leh Hta and Meh Tharaw Hta to arrive at Kwih Lat Der village. We went to Lay Taw Ko but the Burmese didn't lose our names, they still had the register, so we couldn't escape. Even though we had our own work to do, they demanded that we go back and work for them.

Q: What kinds of work did they force you to do?

A: When their column went to the front line, they always forced 6 porters [*from his village*] to follow them. We were 60 people in all. They forced all the men to go. As for the old people who couldn't walk, someone would have to go in their place, usually their son. If there were no men in a family, the family had to pay 300 Kyats. Many villagers from Kwih Lat Der, Thay Po Pwa Hta, Taung Kalay, Meh Tha Law Paw and Kwih Kler had fled to Lay Taw Ko. The Burmese forced groups of 6 from each village to go one after another, 2 days each time. For example, after they forced the Kwih Kler village group to go, it was the turn of another group from another village. They rotated groups from each village in this way. If they didn't have enough people, we had to go again [*twice in a row*]. Each person had to carry twelve 60 mm mortar shells. The Burmese didn't care if it was light or heavy. The soldiers packed the shells and sometimes we had more than twelve. In their own packs they only carried G3 and G4 bullets with some clothes.

Q: Where did you have to carry things?

A: We arrived at Kwih Lat Der at 4 p.m. [*from Lay Taw Ko, ready for their shift of portering*]. They hadn't gone yet. We left at 6 p.m. under an almost full moon. They didn't allow us to use torches. That night we went to Meh T'Ray Hta but weren't able to get all the way to Htee Hta Baw so we had to sleep in the rain in part of Maw village. When we woke in the morning, the porters were forced to cook the food. The Burmese each had a cup of tea but the porters weren't given any. Sometimes we were given rotting rice. They gave us chillies and sometimes salt but they ate good food. We were never given enough food so we had to eat quickly. If you didn't eat quickly or came late there was no food for you and you would have to carry things while hungry.

Q: Did they give you drinking water?

A: They carried drinking water on their belts. They didn't give us any to drink so we had to drink water when we saw a river. If they walked quickly, we had to walk quickly. They didn't like it when we walked slowly. They didn't say anything to us and didn't give us a chance to take a rest. We could only rest when they took a rest.

Q: Did they kick or beat you?

A: When we walked slowly they would use their foot to shove us on the buttocks. They shoved me one time while I was carrying things and had stopped to urinate. I took off my sarong but they didn't allow me to urinate. They threw my clothes aside and forced me to go. My bladder was in a lot of pain but I couldn't do anything. While we were going they didn't allow us to urinate, defecate or eat. We walked into the afternoon, until we couldn't walk anymore. Our bodies were in so much pain, but when I went and asked for medicine they said no. When they themselves were in pain they had medicine. That night we arrived in Htee Hta Baw. We cooked food and ate then we went to sleep. They had friends in Htee Hta Baw. There were over 20 soldiers there but we dared not count. They didn't allow us to enter their camp so we had to stay and sleep outside. The next morning, when we finished eating, we went back to Kwih Lat Der village and other villagers went in our place. The porters who went after us said that they Burmese had pushed them harder than us.

Q: Were the troops in Htee Hta Baw Division 44?

A: No. I saw the number 28 on the shoulders of the troops that are staying there now [*Infantry Battalion #28*]. Their battalion commander's name is Aung Kyaw Myint and he controls 16 soldiers. They always had 2 KPA soldiers with them as well.

Q: What did the other porters tell you?

A: N---, a villager who stayed in the same village as me, said they also kicked his buttocks. He is not strong and is a thin man. He started carrying 12 shells in his basket, then a soldier put his pack in the basket, and then another. He was carrying 12 shells and 2 bags. Sometimes the commander was kind. If the porters carried very heavy things, he became kind. He tossed the 2 packs out of the basket and said that the soldiers had dropped their bags. The soldiers picked up their bags and carried them themselves so N-- - didn't have to carry them. He said that he almost died. When he came back home, he took one pack of penicillin and 2 intravenous drips and then he got better.

Sixty people went but 5 of us had to carry shells and one had to show them the way. The Burmese knew the way but they made trouble for us and forced a villager to go in front of them. I think they were afraid. I'm not sure why, maybe they were afraid that the enemy would shoot at them. *[They were probably more afraid of landmines.]* The KNLA didn't shoot at them because the villagers were with them. The porter in front saw their eating place *[where a KNLA group had eaten]* and so he was afraid, but the Burmese forced him to go so he had to go. Then one Burmese stepped on a landmine and died. I didn't hear of any porters stepping on landmines.

Q: Did the Burmese choose the Kwih Lat Der village headman or did the villagers elect him?

A: The Burmese chose the Kwih Lat Der village headman. He is a Karen. His name is Htun Kyaw and he is Dta La Ku. He is from Kler T'Gu village but he suffered a lot there, so he fled to Kwih Lat Der. However, he still didn't escape and he is still serving the Burmese. He has to serve the Burmese whenever they force him to. They don't force them *[to do forced labour in Kwih Lat Der]* in the rainy season. Usually they were patrolling around Meh Tha Ray Hta, Maw, Htee Hta Baw and Kwih Lat Der.

Q: When the Burmese were in their camp did they order the villagers to go to their camp?

A: They ordered the Kwih Kler villagers to go to their camp every day, their camp was there. They forced 2 villagers to do sentry duty around their camp. Even though the villagers had a lot of work to do they forced them to help them. They only called men to help, but if there were no men in the house a woman had to go. The women were forced to clean their camp. The women also had to clean *[wipe and polish]* the gate that was in the fence surrounding the camp. The men were forced to clear and dig out mud from the bunkers. A sentry forced me to enter the camp. I went with my friend from Htee Hta Baw village. I forget his name but he is married to a Kwih Kler villager and his family is staying in Kwih Kler. The Burmese forced us to enter the camp and to dig mud for the Signal Corps. We also had to dig out the mud in the bunkers. When I was digging I got a cold with a bad cough and chest pain. My body was in a lot of pain and I had to take penicillin.

I also had to do sentry duty twice for one day and a night each time. They didn't give me food and I had to sleep at the camp in the evening. I could see my house from their camp but they still forced us to sleep on the ground at the gate of their camp, they didn't allow us to enter the camp. We slept at night but sometimes they forced some of us to follow them in the night. They didn't force me to follow them. In the morning we went back to the village to eat and then we went back to their camp to work until evening. Then my friend came to replace us and we went back.

Q: How many houses are there in Kwih Kler village?

A: When I was a sentry many villagers had still not fled from the village. There were about 70 or 80 households. Before anyone fled there were 100 houses.

Q: When you went to do forced labour last time, what did they force you to do?

A: They forced me to weave baskets. They didn't teach me how to weave but they still forced me to weave. They found villagers who could weave and they taught us. We had to weave until evening and then we went to sleep. In the morning the sentry beat the hollow log, *Tone! Tone! Tone!* [*imitating the sound*], and we had to go and weave again. We had to cut the cane nicely, if it wasn't nice they didn't like it. The baskets were used to carry ammunition [*by porters*]. We also had to repair their fence if it was broken. Sometimes we had to use bamboo spikes to make booby traps. We had to whittle the bamboo all day and then dig a hole in the earth. We had to do as they were doing, and we dared not say anything. If it was our Karen people forcing us, we could have told them it was very hard or that we were very tired, but we didn't dare tell the Burmese. If I had they would have hit me in the face.

Q: Do you think it is good when the Burmese come and force the villagers to work?

A: No, it is not good because they force us very ruthlessly. They said that they've created peace and that this is now a peaceful area. If they didn't demand that the villagers go with them to the frontline, then the villagers could dare to stay in the villages. But now if they go, day or night, they force the villagers to porter for them. The villagers are suffering. Then some Kwih Kler villagers hit a landmine in Kwih Kler village, and many villagers fled.

Q: Who stepped on a landmine?

A: His name was Paw Eh Pa. We did not know if it was a Burmese or KNLA landmine, but it was put on the way to Kwih Kler, near the top of the village. He went to his farm at 5 a.m. with his wife along the sandy path. His wife was walking in front of him when he stepped on the landmine. His wife was sprayed with sand and she dared not call to her husband. All that was left of her husband was his head, chest and one hand. His feet were found very far from where he died and his liver, intestines and stomach were destroyed. His left hand was wrapped in his sarong, and his right hand had disappeared. His slippers and torch were destroyed and pieces were spread everywhere. We think it was a Burmese landmine. I saw this all with my own eyes. Now his daughter stays here [*at the refugee camp*].

The villagers were selling coconuts and betel, so they gave coconut and betel to Burmese Battalion #357 instead of paying them any money. The Burmese were not satisfied so the villagers think that the Burmese put landmines on the car roads. The Burmese were going to come to bring their rations, but instead they forced a villager who owned a car to take the rations to them. There are landmines before the intersection where the road forks to Ber Kler and Meh Tharaw Hta, near the Meh Naw Ray Hta graveyard. We think the Burmese planted them there. The car with 4 people in it from Htaw Wah Law village hit a landmine. The car had Saw Po Dee, his wife, Ma San San, from Kwih Kler village, his 6-year-old daughter and the driver, Pa Gaw Gu, inside. The car was carrying rice, chillies and beans for the Burmese, and these were spread everywhere after they hit the landmine. Their 6-year-old daughter died, I saw her brain had come out of her nose. If she hadn't been shielded by the rice sacks her body would have been completely destroyed. His wife and the driver escaped out of the front of the car, but Saw Po Dee was thrown from the car and fell. His mouth was bleeding and he was bruised. The Burmese put him on an intravenous drip and then they forced a car from Kwih Kler to take him to Kyaikdon. His wife, whose eyes were swollen from crying, went with him. The Burmese took his daughter to the Burmese camp and covered her body. They didn't allow people to see her but I had gone to see [*the accident site*] before they took her away and felt such pity for the girl. [*Note: given the evidence, it appears that this was a KNLA anti-vehicle mine.*]

Q: How long did Saw Po Dee stay in the hospital?

A: He stayed nearly one month. Now he is better and when he went back and saw his car he was very demoralised. It was destroyed and couldn't be repaired. When they went to Kyaikdon, their daughter was left behind in the [*Army*] camp. Their relatives and 2 other children from Htaw Wah Law took her body to be buried.

Q: When did this happen?

A: I hadn't yet fled the village and was staying in Kwih Kler. It was earlier this year, before the rainy season. *[It occurred on Sunday March 22nd 1998; this event is also mentioned in "Strengthening the Grip on Dooplaya" (KHRG #98-05, 10/6/98).]*

Q: When the KNU went to the village, did they make any problems for the villagers?

A: No, they didn't cause any problems. They passed the village on the outside, they didn't enter the village.

Q: Are the Burmese staying in your village now?

A: They went to stay in Htaw Wah Law. All the Dta La Ku villagers have fled the village, but some other villagers are still left there. We were afraid of them so we dared not stay there. However, if they order us to porter we have to go back. I'm staying in Lay Taw Ko now because I don't dare stay in my village. Lay Taw Ko [*which is just inside Thailand*] is not a refugee camp but people send rice for us. They give rice to all the villagers who have fled to Lay Taw Ko.

Q: Did you see any problems when you were fleeing to Lay Taw Ko?

A: The Burmese knew that the Dta La Ku villagers fled from the village and were carrying rice, so they guarded the path to Ber Kler [*at the Thai border*]. We carried rice from Kwih Lat Der to Meh Tharaw Hta, and the Burmese collected rice from the villagers there. There were 1 Corporal and 12 soldiers. They collected taxes from the villagers who were carrying rice by ox-cart, 500 Kyats from each ox-cart. Whether we carried one basket or 5 baskets of rice in the ox-cart, we had to pay 500 Kyats. If we didn't give the money to the Burmese at Meh Tharaw Hta, they wouldn't allow us to go. After I gave them money, 500 Kyats, they allowed me to go. They collected money from the villagers as though they were begging for food. They came to collect the money every morning. I carried rice two times, so I didn't have any money left.

Q: Now what are you doing in Lay Taw Ko?

A: I am a farmer, but when I recently arrived in Lay Taw Ko I had to cut some firewood and clear grass for other villagers and I got sick, so I've come here to get treatment.

Q: Do you have to be afraid of the Burmese while you are staying in Lay Taw Ko?

A: No. But whenever they need us we have to go back and work for them, even though Lay Taw Ko is on the Thai side [*of the border*]. Lay Taw Ko is on the Thai side of the river and Kwih Lat Der is on the Burma side. I have to go back to porter once a month. Last month I didn't go and paid 300 Kyats instead. If I don't go, I have to pay 300 Kyats or they will make problems for the Kwih Lat Der village headman. They will force the village headman to pay the money. I want to come and stay here but my wife, children and parents-in-law won't come with me so I can't do anything. I have to stay in Lay Taw Ko and farm. The Lay Taw Ko village headman arranges for the poor villagers to get rice. There are over 300 houses in Lay Taw Ko.

Q: Can't the Kwih Lat Der headman take your name off the list of the Burmese?

A: No, because he is staying under the control of the Burmese. The village headman wrote down the names of the villagers from Kwih Kler, Kwih Lat Der, Thay Bay Bwa Hta and Taung Kalay villages. When we have to porter, we must go back.

Q: Do you think staying in Lay Taw Ko is better than when you stayed in your village?

A: Yes, it's better than staying in my village. The villagers who stay in Kwih Kler have to do forced labour every day. They have to do things for the Burmese such as digging bunkers, clearing bunkers, making and repairing baskets and fencing the camp. We have come to stay here and there is no need to do forced labour here, but if they demand porters we must go back. Those who are still in the village haven't said if they are happy or not. They decided not to flee so they will work and suffer under the control of the Burmese. They may live or die. As for me, I couldn't suffer it any more, but if they force me to porter I still must go back.

Q: Did they destroy any villagers' houses?

A: No, but they drove the villagers out of Ter Kler village. Before we fled they forced the villagers from such places as K'Lah Lay, Dta Ri and Htee Po Ghaw to go and stay in Dta Nay Pya together and build their own houses there. Villagers who were staying outside the villages in their farmfield huts were forced to move into Bu Kler village. The villagers couldn't find work there and they couldn't work their land anymore. They were given no food but had to find food for themselves, so they asked the Burmese if they could return to their villages to farm. The Burmese agreed to let them go and now they have gone back to their villages.

Q: Are the DKBA staying in the village now?

A: Many soldiers are staying near Kyaikdon but they are staying in a different place than the Burmese. They don't travel together with the Burmese, at least they haven't done so in front of the villagers, but we don't know if their leaders have plans with the Burmese. The Peace Army [*the KPA*] are with the Burmese. If the Burmese are moving around then the KPA follow them, and if the KPA are moving the Burmese follow them. The DKBA don't travel with the Burmese, but when they attacked Maw Ker and Huay Kaloke [*refugee camps*], the Burmese and the DKBA went together. When I went back to my village, I heard things from the villagers. The DKBA said the KNU and all the Christians are staying in Noh Po [*refugee camp*]. I don't think they have attacked Noh Po yet but I don't know, maybe they will attack later. Now DKBA soldiers have arrived in Kyaikdon, not so long ago. They will encamp in Meh Naw Ah and build a pagoda. Then they will go and encamp in Saw Hta and build a pagoda there. They will make their camps step-by-step until they get to Kwih Lat Der. The Burmese give them food. Some people thought the DKBA would come and stay together with the Burmese because they gave them food, but if they have joined the Burmese they still never go around with them. If they don't work for the Burmese how will they get food? The Burmese demand food from the villagers. We don't know if the Burmese will be good or bad in the future.

Q: What do you plan for your future? Will you stay in Lay Taw Ko?

A: If the situation is better, I will go back to stay in my village. We have fled to stay in other villages, but I don't want to stay in other villages. If the Burmese are still staying in my village, I won't go back. I will go back if there is peace in Burma. If we don't get peace, I won't go back. I will stay in Thailand.

#4.

NAME: “Naw Ghay Wah” **SEX:** F **AGE:** 31
Karen Christian schoolteacher

FAMILY: Married, 4 children but one died last year

ADDRESS: Pay Yay village, Du Yaw area, Pa’an township **INTERVIEWED:**
9/98

[“Naw Ghay Wah” comes from Pa’an District, but in April 1997 she moved south to Dooplaya District to teach there. She fled to a refugee camp in Thailand in August 1998.]

I arrived here in xxxx [refugee camp] 20 days ago. My village is in Du Yaw area, it is called Pay Yay. There are many village tracts in Du Yaw area, such as Hlaing Ga Ba, Kaw Ta Main, Kaw Mu Ta and Kaw Ka Tee village tracts. Pay Yay village is in Kaw Ta Main village tract, in Pa’an Township.

Q: When you stayed in Du Yaw, how was your life?

A: When we stayed in Du Yaw, we taught in school and we got paid monthly by the government [SLORC/SPDC]. My husband was also a teacher in Du Yaw. My father died 2 or 3 years ago. We were civil servants in Du Yaw, but we didn’t have enough to eat. They gave rations but only for the people who were married. They gave us 14 bowls [of rice per month; about 30 kg./70 lb.] each, but none for our children. They didn’t give it for free. We had to buy it at government price. We had to pay 15 Kyats per bowl. It wasn’t enough.

Q: How much did rice cost if you bought it from a shop?

A: At the shop we had to pay 50 or 60 Kyats for one bowl, or over 1,000 Kyats for one big tin. The rice gets even more expensive in the rainy season. We couldn’t buy rice from the shop because the monthly salary they gave us wasn’t enough to buy rice. We had to do farming as well as teach at school, otherwise we wouldn’t have had enough to eat.

Q: In your village did you also have to pay fees to the Burmese?

A: Yes, they made us pay porter fees. When their leaders [local officials] came to the village to have a meeting, they made us pay money and cook curry for them. We had to pay 200, 300, or 500 Kyats every month [per family]. Sometimes we had to pay more, sometimes less. We had to give rice as well. They divided the villagers into three classes [depending on relative wealth]. Those in the first class had to pay more rice.

They made us gather porter fees and then hire villagers to go as porters. They forced people to go depending on the number of houses in the village. If a village has many houses, then they forced 5 to 8 people to go as porters [all the time]. Then the villagers had to hire that many people to go as porters. To hire one porter cost 10,000 Kyats or more each time. They had to follow the columns deployed to the frontline for battle. The porters who knew how to escape ran and fled back home, but some of the porters who didn’t know how to escape got sick and died at the frontline.

Q: Did you ever hear porters who came back talk about their experiences?

A: Yes, I heard. They said that they couldn't carry the loads. Some of them couldn't carry or couldn't walk anymore, but they still had to walk. If they stopped, the soldiers kicked them to the ground. When porters died, they didn't care and just left them there. The porters didn't get enough food. Sometimes they had to eat rotting rice. They soaked the rotting rice in water, then took it out and ate it because sometimes they didn't dare cook [*the soldiers were afraid of being seen by the enemy*]. The soldiers cooked for themselves, but sometimes they didn't dare cook and they ate the same way as the porters.

Q: Did your husband ever have to go as a porter?

A: No, because he was a school teacher. Mostly it was the villagers who were poor and needed the money who went as porters.

Q: What Battalion came to your village?

A: Division 22. They had a camp at Shwe Pyi Daun, near Ain Du. They said they came to defend the village, but they stole things in the village. They gave guns to people who they trusted, people who were bold and dared to steal, then forced them to steal. They found these people in other villages and then sent them to our village to steal. They hired those people to steal for them. I don't know how much they had to pay to hire a thief. We saw and heard about villagers who lost their things in our village. They stole from the villagers who were rich. They took things from their houses and sometimes stole their cattle. They asked the villagers for pigs and chickens and the villagers gave them. The soldiers didn't pay for the chickens or pigs, so all the villagers collected money to cover the price and gave it to the owners. My parents-in-law have a fish pond, and every time they catch their fish they have to give some to the Burmese. The Burmese heard the sound of the pump whenever we drained the water from the pond, and then if we didn't send them some fish they started firing off their guns. When they asked for our fish we had to give them all the biggest ones. They didn't come to get it themselves, they forced the sentries [*villagers doing forced labour as sentries*] to come and get them. Then if we didn't give them the fish, the soldiers fired their guns.

Q: Did they ever torture people when they came to the village?

A: I haven't seem them torture the villagers recently, but 5 or 6 years ago they tortured the villagers. At that time I was staying with my husband but I had no children. If the Burmese heard that the people from the East [*meaning KNLA soldiers*] came back to the village, they came to torture the village headman and the women who welcomed them and gave them food. They tortured people in this way from all the villages. Sometimes they tortured the village headmen until they died.

Q: Did they make the villagers do forced labour?

A: Yes, they ordered it from all the villagers in each village. At that time I went to stay with my husband in the village of my parents-in-law. They live in Pyat Line village, which is near Sa Dan Gu and the Burmese camp at Shwe Pyi Daun. It's only half an hour's walk from my village. We went to stay there when I had only one child and we

taught in the village. Everyone had to do forced labour, both women and men. The villagers had to send one person from each house. If people from our village went to do forced labour today, then tomorrow the villagers from another village would have to go. They built the road every day. They only took a rest on Sundays and new moon days.

All the villagers had to go for forced labour, if they didn't go the village headman would fine them one bottle of alcohol for each villager. The villagers who had no time to go could tell the Burmese and the Burmese gave them a break [*generally in these cases they have to make it up later*]. They didn't force children who were too young to go, but they forced everyone over 15 years old. Some younger children went in place of their parents but they were sent back because they can't do the labour. They didn't force people who were over the age of 60.

Q: What did they force the villagers to do?

A: They forced them to clear the area around their camp and to grow rubber near Shwe Pyi Daun. The villagers have to go once a week to clear the grass and to carry water for the plants in the hot season. The rubber plantation was very large and it was near their camp, but when I went back it had all been burned down by a forest fire.

Q: Did they give food to the villagers who go for forced labour?

A: No, they have to take their own food. They also have to go in the rainy season. In that area there are floods in the rainy season. The villagers had to go in the day and come back at night to sleep. They had to work all day from 8 o'clock in the morning until 5 o'clock in the evening, and they could only rest in the afternoon for a few minutes. If the villagers couldn't work the soldiers scolded them, but they didn't beat them. Some soldiers are kind and some are very bad.

Q: Did they force the villagers to do anything else?

A: They forced us to build a road from Du Yaw to Nat Kyine. They gathered all the villagers from Kaw Ta Main village tract to do this. When they first started building, the villagers had to work between the two villages and sleep at the worksite every day. They took the villagers from many of the villages by car. They had to go to work and sleep there for 2 or 3 days at a time. It was in the deep jungle. It took one or two hours to get there. They forced them to work for a few days and then they could go home for 10 or 15 days. During that time they'd get villagers from other villages and force them to work for a few days. They would rotate, village to village. They didn't force us to go in rainy season. In the three months of hot season each village had to go 5 or 6 times. If the villagers couldn't go they had to hire people to go for them. They had to pay over 1,000 Kyats, maybe 1,500 Kyats [*for each 2-3 day rotation*]. If they could not pay, no one wanted to go for them because the work was very heavy. When I went back this year, that road was already finished.

When they built the Salween bridge [*a large bridge over the Salween River at Myaing Galay, not far upriver from Pa'an*], the villagers had to go to dig earth and put it on the road to raise the road to the level of the bridge. The villagers had to walk there. Every house in the village had to send one person three times a month. They went for two days at a time and had to take along their own rice and other food. They didn't force people over 60 years old to go. Villagers who couldn't go had to hire someone to go for them for 1,500 Kyats. They have no choice, they must go. Some villagers who only had small children [*none old enough to go for forced labour*] had to leave their farms and hire people to tend their farms for them so that they could go themselves to do forced labour. It was cheaper to hire someone to tend their farm than to hire someone to do forced labour in their place.

Q: When did you move to Po Hsi Mu [*in Dooplaya District*]?

A: I went to stay there last year during the Burmese water festival [*April 1997*]. The government [*SPDC*] ordered me to teach in Po Hsi Mu but when I got there I didn't receive any monthly pay. I sold all the chickens from our old village and we used all that money. The villagers gave me rice, and I treated patients and got some money from them. My mother came to stay with me and sold noodles. There was one schoolteacher there. Then the government changed all the rules and made us teach only Burmese subjects. They wouldn't allow us to teach in Karen language. But that other teacher couldn't teach in Burmese [*so he/she lost the job*]. I taught there for one year, then I went to the teacher training in Leh Gu and then I came back to Po Hsi Mu with my husband and my children.

They called 8 people from Saw Hta area, including me, to attend the training in Leh Gu. It was in March 1998. I went to attend the training for 3 months in Leh Gu. There was no one to take care of my children because my mother had already fled here [*to the refugee camp*], so first I took my children and left them with my husband back in Du Yaw. When I finished the training in the rainy season, I called my husband and my children to come and stay with me in Po Hsi Mu. He was still teaching in Du Yaw. He applied for a transfer.

Q: How was the training?

A: They called it “Border Areas Development” [*this SLORC/SPDC program is partly funded by the UN Development Programme and other UN agencies*]. Three months of special primary school teacher training. It was in Kya In Seik Gyi township. There were 31 of us from Karen State, 6 men and 25 women. I was the leader of the women. At the training they spoke to us very harshly. The border development supervisor was a Burmese woman from Mandalay. She scolded us. She told me, “You people from Karen State, your bags are very small [*i.e. you brought very little*], haven’t you ever been to a training before?” We didn’t want to go to their training! But the soldiers ordered me to go, and they said, “No need to take your things, everything is there”. The woman scolded us because we didn’t bring our sleeping mats and blankets. We didn’t dare talk back to her because she is a border supervisor, we all just cried. We talked to each other about how she thinks Karen people are lower class. She didn’t scold the other nationalities [*probably Burmans and Mons*], only us.

I was there for three months. They gave us food twice each day. At lunchtime we could take the food to the dormitory and eat it there. They gave us a very tiny cup of rice with a small piece of chicken for each person. It wasn’t enough to eat, so we had to buy food from the shops. I took along 30,000 Kyats of my own money and it lasted me for the 3 months. Some of the single girls had to spend 40,000 or 50,000 Kyats.

After I left the training I stayed in Po Hsi Mu for two more months. After that we couldn’t stay anymore in Po Hsi Mu. The monthly pay from the government is 925 Kyats but I never got it. They said that they’d received my transfer papers [*from Du Yaw*] but that they couldn’t give me my pay right away. My husband never got his pay either, so we couldn’t stay there. He came and stayed with me and taught in Po Hsi Mu, but he never got paid. The villagers gave us some food, but the government didn’t give us any food. Then we all got sick. Our whole family was sick, my husband, my children and myself. Medicines were very expensive. We had to pay 15 Kyats for each capsule of penicillin. To take medicine just one time cost 40 or 50 Kyats, and if we had to take medicine 3 times a day we had to pay over 100 Kyats. We were living there in poverty, and if we’d stayed there any longer our children would have died and I would have died too. We all had malaria. When we arrived here [*the refugee camp*] and had our blood checked in the clinic, we all tested positive for malaria. Last year one of my children died in Po Hsi Mu. She was 4 years old and died of malaria. When she was sick I sent her to Saw Hta, but they don’t do malaria tests there, they only treat wounded soldiers. There is no medicine for our children. We have to buy that and treat them ourselves. Now I have 3 children - 2 sons and 1 daughter. My youngest daughter is 2 years and 3 months old. My eldest is 10, he is in 4th Standard.

Q: When you stayed in Po Hsi Mu, did the villagers have to go as porters?

A: Yes, if the Burmese soldiers went on patrol, they forced the village headman to collect 3 or 4 villagers to carry their things. They don’t call them porters, they call them “servants” [*wontan*]. The village headman has to find the people to do it and rotate the people every time. They have to carry bullets and rice. They have to go for three days at

a time. Some take their own food, but some eat together with the soldiers. Once I heard the soldiers say, “No need to bring food, you can eat with us”. They go around Kwih Kler area, to places like Po Hsi Mu, Kyaw Kee, Meh T’Leh Kee and Saw Hta.

They went to patrol in Meh T’Leh, but they didn’t dare go to Ter Klah because they heard there were Karen soldiers there. We told them, “There are very big fish in that pond, why don’t you go and shoot them?”, but they said, “No, we don’t dare go there.” They are from Division 22. Their commander has a long beard. They stayed in the village [*in the villagers’ houses*]. We told them there’s an old military camp there, why don’t you prepare it and stay there? But they said they didn’t want to stay there. They stayed in the village, mostly in the houses of women who have children. Their commander came to sleep in my house one time. The village chairman’s house is very big, but they didn’t stay there. [*They like to use the women and children as shields against attack.*] We had to give them food and they cooked it themselves. They didn’t bring their own rice. They also stole our fruit and vegetables that grow near our houses, like corn, cucumbers and many kinds of fruit. They stole our chickens at night when we couldn’t see. If we went to tell their commander, he said, “If you see them, just tell them not to do it”. When they rotated their troops, they took all the chickens and sold them in Saw Hta village. If they’re sleeping in Po Hsi Mu, they go to Meh T’Leh to steal. Whenever they’re patrolling they look to see who has a lot of chickens. They sleep two nights in the village, then they leave for two or three days and then come back again. They move around the area of Kwih Kler, Meh T’Leh, Kyaw Kee and Saw Hta.

Q: Did you see DKBA there?

A: No, but I saw them last year. I’ve also seen *Nyein Chan Yay* [*Karen Peace Army, allied with SPDC*] staying together with the SPDC.

Q: How long were you in Po Hsi Mu?

A: I stayed there the whole year last year as a teacher, then I went to the teacher training [*March-May 1998*], then I came back but only stayed two more months.

Q: How did you get here from Po Hsi Mu?

A: We slept in Ber Kler one night and then we arrived here the next morning. We walked from Po Hsi Mu to Ber Kler and then came here on a car. When we arrived at the checkpoint of Noh Po refugee camp the Thai soldiers asked me, “Where are you going? Do you have a pass?” We said, “No, we are going to the camp hospital because we are all sick”. Then they wrote down our names and let us go. We came to stay in my brother’s house here. When we stayed in Po Hsi Mu we were all sick. When we got here we got treated for malaria, and now we’re healthy.

Q: Do you think you will go back and stay in your village?

A: No. I want to stay together with my brothers and my family, and I don’t think they’ll go back to Burma. I had feelings of suffering in Burma because we are Karen and they treat us like we are very low people.

I am very happy to stay here because my husband and children and I are healthy. I am not someone who loves money, I just want to live a healthy life. If someone needs my help working here in the camp, I will work. I passed 10th Standard [*high school*] in Burma and received teacher training and midwife training. I worked in my village but I couldn't get any support. Burma is our country but nobody there treats us fairly when we work. When my children got sick, I had to buy medicine for them in the shop and treat them myself. When I stayed in Po Hsi Mu for the last two months I spent over 10,000 Kyats that way, and I realised I could not stay like that anymore. If I'd stayed there much longer my children would have died there, we all would have died there.

#5.

NAME: “Saw Day Htoo” **SEX:** M **AGE:** 40
Karen Christian relief worker
FAMILY: Married, had 7 children but 2 have already died
ADDRESS: Kwih K’Baw village, central Dooplaya District
INTERVIEWED: 9/98

[“Saw Day Htoo” tried to stay in his village after it was occupied by SLORC in early 1997, but fled after 3 months and now lives in Noh Po refugee camp in Thailand. When interviewed he had just returned from a trip back into central Dooplaya District together with a team of Karen relief workers trying to help internally displaced people in the region.]

Q: Where is your village?

A: My village is Kwih K’Baw. There are 10 houses in my village, but now there are no families left there because all of them have already fled. I fled from my village on May 12th last year [1997], because I could not tolerate the abuse of the Burmese anymore. Before I fled, I was under the control of the Burmese for three months. The Burmese held me under arrest for three months, until three guns were given to them. We could not lie to them, they knew everything about us. Anytime we lied to them they beat us and showed us witnesses. In those three months I had to do forced labour every day. I had to carry their things, guide them to places where they wanted to go, walk along with them and do anything else that they asked of me. That is why I fled. They didn’t destroy our village because it was near to their camp and also near to other villages; Meh Naw Ah is there, Htee Wah Klu is there, and our village, Kwih K’Baw, is there [*gesturing to indicate the relative position of villages*]. The Burmese soldiers are living in Meh Naw Ah, so they didn’t destroy our village but they ate all the coconuts, bananas and other fruit. Now I live in Noh Po.

Q: How long were you in Dooplaya on this [*latest*] trip?

A: I went there for over one month. I started off on the 7th of July, and arrived back on the 8th of September. I arrived at Noh Maw Poh and Thi Kweh, in Kaw T’Kha township. Noh Maw Poh is in the lower part of the township. I entered the Kaw T’Kha area through the area where the IDPs [*internally displaced people*] are hiding. I didn’t arrive in the Saw Hta area. It is not easy to visit the 6th Brigade [*Dooplaya*] now.

Q: How about the villagers? Are they still living in the villages?

A: No, they are not living in their villages. They are living in the jungle, though not all of them because some villagers are living under the authority of the enemy [*SPDC*]. The people who live under the authority of the Burmese must do forced labour for them and must also go as porters. Those who live with the Burmese sometimes have to carry things from Kyaikdon down to Kalay Kee and to [*Kya In*] Seik Gyi. Sometimes they have to carry things from Kyaikdon up to Kwih Kler, Kwih Lat Der, and Htee Hta Baw. [*Htee Hta Baw is at least 100 km. south of Kyaikdon, towards Three Pagodas Pass.*] The villagers who don’t live close to the enemy are living in the jungle, on the mountains and

at the source of the rivers. The people who are living in the jungle do not show themselves because they don't want to work for the SPDC.

Q: How many families are living in the jungle?

A: In the area that I reached, we only took the names of 78 families. Those families are from Noh Maw Poh, Nu Kloh Ti, Htee Nu Gu and Yah Pah Leh. The villagers we haven't documented yet are from Lay Teray, Htee Po Khaw and Hter Ta Klah, so my guess is that there are more than 100 families of villagers living there in the jungle. They began living in the jungle when the Burmese first arrived, over a year ago. The Burmese know they are in the jungle and they go looking for them sometimes, but the people always hide themselves. Each family keeps 4 or 5 shelters in different places. When the Burmese come near one of their shelters they run to another shelter, and when the Burmese move on toward that shelter they run to the next one of their shelters. Each family has five shelters in five different places so that they can stay in the jungle. They always run with at least one big tin of rice to eat. Each family works two or three fields in different places. Every time the Burmese commander orders his soldiers to go out, the villagers in the jungle must run away. If the Burmese soldiers and the KNLA soldiers meet each other there will be a battle.

Q: Do most of the villagers stay in the villages or in the jungle?

A: More people are in the villages than in the jungle, because when the Burmese soldiers first arrived they looked for the villagers who had fled and ordered the people they found to return to the villages. When we went we could only enter the villages that had no Burmese soldiers, we didn't dare to go to villages where Burmese soldiers stay. People are still living in the villages which are near the *[Thai]* border, but there are no people in the villages starting from Dta Broh and Kay Lu Nee. There are no people in Dta Broh Kee. There are people in K'Yeh Theh and Yaw Ka Daw. Their area is mined and the Burmese control them. There are also mines around Yan Day Ya and there are people living there.

Q: Why don't the people who stay in the jungle go to Noh Po *[refugee]* camp?

A: When the Burmese started to come to their villages they fled together to Thay Pu Law Htwee. But then the Thai soldiers threatened them by shooting their guns at them, so they were afraid and went back to stay in the jungle. *[In November 1997 Thai troops shot up a group of refugees sheltering at Thay Pu Law Htwee, driving many of them back into Burma, while others ended up being admitted to Noh Po refugee camp.]* Now they stay in the jungle because they don't dare come to Thailand again. They are afraid.

Q: Are they well or sick?

A: Those in the jungle are not so healthy because they have no medicine with them. They suffer from malaria, oedema, abscesses, dysentery, diarrhoea, headaches, *dee klich law* *[symptomised by grotesque swelling of one or both testicles]*, gastric pains, belly pains, numbness *[quasi-paralysis brought on by severe Vitamin B deficiency]*, ringworm and many other illnesses. Of course, they die from the illnesses sometimes. Both children and adults have died because there is no medicine. Last year, among those 78 families 3 people died from diarrhoea, and 1 or 2 died of malaria. Those are the ones I

know of, but I don't know exactly how many of them really died because we didn't take the names of those who died.

Q: Are there any Karen soldiers around there?

A: Yes, there are some Karen soldiers there, about 30 of 40 of them. Sometimes they shoot at the Burmese soldiers and the Burmese return fire. There are no landmines around there.

Q: Are the Burmese building any motor roads?

A: Yes, they're working on the car road. They just rebuilt the car road which leads to Sa Keh, it goes from Saw Hta to Kyaikdon. There is also a car road from Kyaikdon to *[Kya In]* Seik Gyi but it's not as well built as the roads you see around here - it looks more like an oxcart track. The villagers had to work on it. When the Burmese first came, they came with a bulldozer to dig the mud for the construction of the road because the villagers weren't able to make the road correctly, but then they took the bulldozer away and the villagers had to do the work. The bulldozer hasn't come again since last year. There is also a road that connects Saw Hta, Kwih Lat Der and Htee Hta Baw which was built back when everyone was living there *[before the SLORC/SPDC occupation, when the area was controlled by the KNU]*. Now they are working on this old road using machetes and mattocks *[large hoes; this is being done as forced labour by the villagers]*.

Q: Have they finished the road from Po Yay to Kyo G'Lee? *[Going east from Kyaikdon through the mountains; this road was being constructed mainly by a corps of Army Engineers with heavy equipment.]*

A: I think they've finished it, but I'm not sure. They don't dare use it because Karen soldiers stay in the hills along the road - there are Bo Kyi Lay's troops, Battalion 103, and the 6th Brigade troops *[of the KNU]*. There are 200 or 300 of Bo Kyi Lay's soldiers around there all the time, so even though they constructed the road they don't dare to use it.

Q: Do the villagers have to do any other forced labour?

A: Yes, the villagers have to do many kinds of forced labour. Every day, two or three people from each village have to go and stay in the Burmese camp and do whatever the Burmese soldiers ask them to do, such as standing sentry, portering, and other things. The Saw Hta villagers have to do forced labour every day. One person from each family has to go. If there are no men in the family then a woman must go. Children aged 16 and above must go. They *[Burmese soldiers]* don't care about old age. The old people must go also.

Q: I heard that villagers around Saw Hta and Kyaikdon can only go to their farms from morning until evening. Is that true?

A: Yes. They can't stay in their field huts because when they go to their farms they must get a pass that only lasts for one day's work. If they don't have a pass then they *[SPDC soldiers]* treat them as their enemy.

Q: Do the villagers have to give them any rice?

A: The villagers had to give the Burmese some rice even though they [*the soldiers*] already received some rice from town [*their rations*]. Now in Kyaikdon area they have taken some fields. The Burmese are supervising these confiscated fields and forcing the villagers to work often on the fields. The Burmese have established a paddy plantation at Kyaikdon but it is the villagers who have to do all the work on it.

Q: Do the Burmese soldiers force the villagers to relocate?

A: They don't force them [*at gunpoint*] but they order them to go and live at the relocation sites. The villagers don't dare to go because they know that people who go and live there have to do forced labour and are beaten by the Burmese soldiers, and sometimes they are killed. So the villagers always run away whenever they tell them to go and live at a relocation site. The villagers from Thay Pa Htaw had to relocate to Po Yay. Because of the relocation many of the villagers fled and several villages were destroyed. Now the Thay Pa Htaw villagers have returned to Thay Pa Htaw village and are staying there again. In Kya In area, near [*Kya In*] Seik Gyi, the Burmese relocated villages like T'Ka Kee and Kalay Kee. There are still people in Dta Ku Kee because there have been a Burmese school and Burmese teachers in Dta Ku Kee for a long time already. Villagers from Kalay Kee had to move to Dta Ku Kee, but some had to go to T'Ka Kloh and some to Nu Taw Blah, which are very far from Kalay Kee. Kalay Kee is below Kyaikdon. Now nobody is living in Kalay Kee village because the Burmese already forced them to move, and there is also nobody in Toh Kee. The villagers are now all spread out. Nobody is there.

Q: Do the Burmese still kill any villagers?

A: Yes, they do. I noted that information in my book but I didn't bring my book so I can't remember the dates of the killings. While I was there they didn't kill anyone but before I arrived they killed one person in Nu Kloh Ti village. His name was Saw Dee Dee, son of Naw Mu Ku. He was a villager. He has no father, only a mother who is a widow. He arrived back to visit his village with his friend at night, so the next day he slept. The Burmese soldiers entered his village suddenly and asked his mother, "Where is the man of the house?" His mother woke him up and he got up from his bed. He came out, and the Burmese soldiers immediately shot and killed him as soon as they saw him. They did this without any reason. They didn't ask any questions before shooting him, but later they said that it had been their mistake to shoot him. This happened three months ago. His name was Dee Dee and he was 18 years old. He was not married. He was just a villager.

Q: Do the Burmese soldiers shoot and kill any farmers when they see them in the fields?

A: No, because they force those people to labour for them. But if a battle occurs near a village then after that they kill any villagers they see because they say that the villagers are the energy of the KNU. They never leave villagers alive [*once they decide to target them*]. If they don't kill them right away then they capture them and beat them. If they are not sure whether a farmer is a soldier or not they kill him.

Now 38 members of the DKBA have come to Kyaikdon and we don't know what they will do. They don't stay in Kyaikdon, but in a place above Kyaikdon called Tha Der Ko [*this is a big hill north of Kyaikdon, near Kwih Kalay*]. They aren't building a road, but they said that they will build a religious centre at Tha Der Ko. The villagers must help them [*building a pagoda*]. It is mainly the Buddhists who have to help them, but the Christians also have to go whenever they are told. We heard that they had planned to attack Noh Po [*refugee camp*]. We don't know when, but they said they will wait until the rivers get a little shallower.

Q: But last year the Burmese said they were giving Thu Mu Heh and his KPA authority over this area and they sent the DKBA away. What is happening?

A: Thu Mu Heh's army, the KPA, is in Klih but he is not there [*Thu Mu Heh reportedly stays in Kya In Seik Gyi, a strongly SPDC-controlled town to the west*]. Klih is below Kyaikdon [*downstream along the Hong Thayaw river*] near Kwih Kalay. They have nearly 2,000 soldiers around, but I don't know exactly how many [*other observers estimate only 200-300*]. Now they have become the enemy of the KNU. Thu Mu Heh's soldiers came near the border. I saw them recently, coming down from Saw Hta. If a villager becomes a KPA soldier his family does not have to do forced labour. Some villagers become KPA soldiers. Some of those who joined have remained as KPA soldiers, but most of them have already quit. In each village there are 4 or 5 KPA soldiers now.

Q: Do the soldiers of the KPA cause problems for the villagers?

A: Yes, they cause problems for the villagers by asking for taxes whenever the Burmese soldiers ask for taxes, and they also force people to work whenever the Burmese soldiers

force people to work. The villagers say that the KPA are nice to them about one-third of the time. Sometimes they protect the Karen people when the Burmese are going to persecute them.

Q: What is the job of the KPA?

A: Basically the Burmese created the KPA to fight the KNU, but there haven't been any battles between the KPA and the KNU yet. They [*KPA recruits*] were forced to become soldiers and they were given guns. Anytime we [*KNU*] want to talk to them, for example when we are in Thi Kweh and they are [*nearby*] in K'Ma Kler, we ask them to come see us and they come. So there have been no battles between us. The Burmese don't know about that. If they know, they will punish the KPA. The KPA is working under the Burmese, so they won't do anything more than meet with the KNU [*i.e. they won't make any agreements or help them attack the SPDC*]. The Burmese feed the KPA, and their soldiers get 1,000 Kyats a month salary. The commanders get 1,500 Kyats a month, maybe the corporals too.

Q: Do many people want to become KPA soldiers?

A: No, but the KPA commander ordered each village headman to give them some villagers to become soldiers. The village headmen don't dare to violate orders so they must ask the villagers to go and become KPA soldiers. Two or three people from each village have to become KPA soldiers.

Q: Do the Burmese soldiers still have a camp in Lay Po Hta [*at the Thai border*]?

A: The Burmese soldiers are staying in many places, like the other side of the river [*Lay Po Hta*], Kwih Kler, Saw Hta, Meh Naw Ah, Kyaikdon, Noh Ta Khaw, Ler Ther Maw, Kalay Kee, T'Ku Kee and [*Kya In*] Seik Gyi. In Kyaikdon there are a hundred Burmese soldiers because they are building a Battalion base there. They have two battalion bases; one in Kyaikdon and another at Kwih Kler. The number of soldiers at each of their other camps is only 50 or 60 because they are a column, not a battalion. I'm not sure about the total number of soldiers, but all of them are from the same Division. In Saw Hta there are about 80 soldiers, 60 soldiers in Htee Hta Baw and 20 or 30 soldiers in Wah Lu. The Burmese soldiers patrol the villages often.

Q: Is the morale of the Karen soldiers still high?

A: Karen soldiers get food from the Karen people who are living in the jungle and they also get food from the Karen people who are living under Burmese control. They get food including salt, fishpaste, chillies and rice. The people also send them money sometimes even though they don't have much for themselves. The people help them that way. The Karen don't like the Burmese though, they want to shoot the Burmese soldiers. The Karen soldiers still have the courage to fight against the SPDC Army so that the people who are living in the jungle can return to their villages and live peacefully. That is what our soldiers hope.

Q: Do you think the people in the jungle must flee or can they remain living in the jungle?

A: The fighting cannot help the people to stay in their villages safely, and I cannot afford to help the people in the jungle. I'm not powerful enough to help them. Maybe the help of foreigners can enable the villagers to live safely in their villages.

Q: The SPDC said that if Karen soldiers give them all of their weapons they will make peace. What do you think about that?

A: Our Karen people will never surrender and give them our weapons. If we surrender and give them our weapons then our revolutionaries who have died or been injured in the fighting have suffered for nothing. If all of our Karen soldiers die, only then will the fighting end. But we still have soldiers so we will continue to fight. Now some women are even becoming KNLA soldiers. The women from 6th Brigade join the revolution because many women have been violated by the Burmese, women have been raped and killed. The women cannot tolerate this, so they become soldiers. Most of the women who have become soldiers have sisters or mothers who were tortured and killed. There was one woman from Kalay Kee village who became a soldier. She was angry at the Burmese because they had killed her brother who was a soldier. Before they killed him, they gouged out his eyes and broke all the bones in his arms and legs. Then they cut open his belly.

Q: Do the villagers dare to become headman of their village?

A: If the village headman resigns then the Burmese soldiers choose another villager to be the village headman. In Saw Hta area the village headmen have all been chosen by the Burmese soldiers, such as the headmen of the villages of Wah Lu, Ta Ri Kee and K'Yeh Theh. But later they still persecute the village headmen [*even though they chose themselves*]. For example, I am a village headman and you are Karen soldiers. You come to my village and we become friends, but whenever you go to attack them you never tell me. Yet I am supposed to know everything about when you are planning to attack them and where you camp, and report this to the Burmese soldiers or else they will persecute me. Persecution of the headman in this way is very common. One of the headmen is named Maw Tun Kay, he is from Ta Ri Kee near Saw Hta. The Burmese soldiers knew that he was the headman and that there were army people around to defend his village, so they put him in a pit in the ground and asked him how many guns were in the village. They said that if he didn't give them the guns they would kill him. Then he gave them two guns and he was released. That was a long time ago [*1997*], when Divisions 44 and 22 first came to control the area. Last hot season [*earlier in 1998*], there was a headman named Mu Ku Pah. The Burmese didn't make him dig a pit for himself like Maw Tun Kay, but they tied him up and hung him above the ground and then beat him.

Right now even though there are battles occurring there isn't a problem for the villagers, because the battles occur frequently and the Burmese already know that the KNU soldiers are near the villages. The villagers always tell the Burmese soldiers, "The KNU soldiers are nearby", but that they don't know exactly where they are. "So", they say, "if they shoot at you that is not our responsibility, because we have already warned you that they are nearby." When the villagers tell them the KNU are nearby it's okay because they always order the villagers to report about that.

Q: Do the villagers there have to be porters for the KNLA soldiers?

A: No, they don't have to, because now we don't have any columns in 6th Brigade. Before we had Thu Mu Heh, who controlled our KNLA column there, but now he has surrendered to the SPDC and formed the KPA, so there is no KNLA column in 6th Brigade. All we have are guerrilla soldiers, in groups of 10 to 60 soldiers. They ask rice from the villagers, and the villagers are happy to feed them. If they have food to eat they want the soldiers to be able to eat as well. When we were there we finished one big tin of rice, and the next day we received another big tin of rice.

Q: Are they building pagodas only near Kwih Kalay or in other areas also?

A: They are building pagodas everywhere. The soldiers order the villagers to build the pagodas. The Christians have to go sometimes too, whenever they are told to. Do not say that the soldiers will help you. Even when your back is wounded from carrying sand the soldiers will continue to watch over you with guns. After they've finished building the pagodas the Buddhists will bow down to the pagodas, but not the Christians. In Kyaikdon there was a 100-year-old pagoda called Oorey Pagoda. The Burmese know that the old pagodas have many valuable objects inside, so they destroy these pagodas to steal the valuables. After that, the Burmese soldiers order the villagers to build a new pagoda but don't give them any building supplies. The Burmese soldiers already reported that they've destroyed the old Oorey Pagoda and that they've built a new pagoda in its place. That is what they did. Don't ever think that they will help the people.

Q: Are there still many Christian families around?

A: There is a group of Christians in K'Ma Kler who still have a church. There is a group of Christians in Kwih Kler who still stay in the village, and there is a group of Christians in Po Yay as well. None of these Christians have a Pastor. They can worship without a pastor, the elders lead them in worship. They can worship freely, they have bibles and hymn books. They can contact each other. They have no problems because of their religion. However, they need a pastor. The pastors are all in Noh Po [*refugee camp*] now, and they don't dare go back and face the Burmese again because while they were under control of the Burmese, the Burmese always looked for their weaknesses. For example, Pastor S--- was living under the control of the Burmese but his brother-in-law is a KNLA soldier, so the Burmese soldiers harassed him. He didn't dare to stay there anymore and fled to Noh Po. If the pastors from the [*SPDC-controlled*] towns had the courage to come to the villages that would be nice, but the Christians in the towns need them there too. We went together with one pastor and we could see that spiritually, the Christians there need pastors. But we saw that most of the villagers there are not Christian, they are Animists. Now they can't go back to their villages and they have no pigs or chickens. They told us they would like to be baptised. I asked them, "Do you want to be baptised because you are in poverty? If you were going back to your villages would you still want to be baptised?" They told us that once they get baptised they won't go back to being Animists even if the situation changes.

When Division 44 first came [*at the beginning of the occupation*], the Christians built small shelves for Buddhist shrines in their houses so that the Burmese soldiers would think

that they were Buddhist and not bother them, because they said each village could only have one religion. When I was in Ta Ri Kee, I was the only Christian so I had to build a shrine in my house. But now that doesn't happen anymore. They already resolved that problem because some of the Burmese soldiers are Christian.

Q: In Saw Hta and Thi Kweh areas can the children of the villagers go to school?

A: In Saw Hta there is a school that the Burmese soldiers established, so the children can go to school *[before the occupation there was already a large Karen primary and high school there, which is now an Army base; the football ground is now an Army helipad]*. It's a Burmese school but I think the Karen language is taught in the school because the teachers are all from the surrounding villages. But the children living in the jungle can't go, because they can't dare go to the big village *[for fear of suspicion by SPDC as 'children of KNLA soldiers']*.

Q: Are there any hospitals?

A: No. In Saw Hta the Burmese collected money from the villagers to establish a hospital and then forced the villagers to build it. But when the villagers go to the hospital, when they're ill, they must pay. They don't have enough medicine. In Kalay Kee they also collected money to establish a hospital which the villagers then had to build, and there too the villagers must pay when they go to the hospital. The medics are army medics. When they first came they brought some civilian medics, but now they went back already. In *[Kya In]* Seik Gyi there are some civilian medics now. The civilian medics are Karens from Kya In, Dta Ku Kee and T'Ka Kee.

The most important need of people there is medicine. There are many people who can help as medics *[in the remaining villages]* but they can't do anything without medicine. When I went there, I saw two patients in serious condition and one of them died because they had no medicine. He had diarrhoea. The other person had abscesses all over his body and swelling. We didn't have much medicine, we only had one vial of penicillin. But we gave him an injection and prayed for him, and he got better.

Q: In Pa'an District the lack of rain this year has caused problems with the paddy crop. Has that also happened in Dooplaya?

A: In 6th Brigade *[Dooplaya]* people are able to plant varying amounts of paddy, because some or all of their fields have no water from the rain. Most of them cannot sow much paddy because there's been little rain. They have to get passes to work in their fields from the Burmese but the real problem is the lack of rain. *[This problem has occurred throughout Southeast Asia this year, apparently caused by the El Niño phenomenon.]*

Q: Do the villagers still have much paddy from last year?

A: When they fled from the Burmese soldiers *[in 1997]* they hadn't yet harvested their paddy. Then when they returned they discovered that their fields were green with paddy but that most of it had reseeded itself *[the grains had fallen]* and since there was little water left no more paddy could grow. For this reason each family could only get a small amount of rice from their fields, about 50 to 100 baskets per family. Anyway, the

Burmese soldiers did not ask the villagers to give them rice this year, but we don't know if they will ask in the future. The Burmese soldiers do not buy the rice from the villagers. Sometimes they simply demand 3 or 5 baskets of rice. They don't ask for rice often, but when they do it's because they don't have enough for themselves. They don't like to eat the rice which comes for them from town, because it's very old rice. So they sell the old rice from town and order the villagers to give them rice to eat. If the villagers don't give them any rice they make trouble for them. That happens very often. So even if the villagers don't have any rice to give they must find a way to give some.

#6.

NAME: "Pa Bway Htoo"
Karen Dta La Ku farmer
SEX: M **AGE:** 44
FAMILY: Married, 7 children
ADDRESS: On the Burma-Thai border in Dooplaya District
INTERVIEWED: 9/98

["Pa Bway Htoo" is a Dta La Ku village elder who often has to negotiate with all sides in the conflict. A previous interview with him can be found in "Strengthening the Grip on Dooplaya" (KHRG #98-05, 10/6/98). In this interview, Dta La Ku elders from two other villages also added their comments at times.]

Q: The last time we spoke you said the Dta La Ku elders went to the Burmese leaders and asked if they could move to one secure place and be free of forced labour, but that they hadn't received an answer yet. *[This occurred in March/April 1998.]* Have they received an answer now?

A: First we asked the Burmese if the Dta La Ku people could all come to live together in an area along the border. Living separately doesn't allow us to keep in good contact to uphold our religious traditions. The Burmese gave us permission, so we came to live near the border. After that, the KPA came and asked us to become soldiers. We told them we cannot become soldiers because we don't involve ourselves in politics. They stopped asking us for a while. Finally we went to the *[SPDC]* Operations Commander and asked if he could excuse us from portering. He agreed and gave us a letter of permission to be excused. After only six days, the Burmese soldiers ordered the Dta La Ku villagers to be porters again, and they told us that if the Dta La Ku people don't do as they require then all Dta La Ku people must leave their country. But what the Burmese say is never consistent. In the morning they say one thing and in the evening they say something else. When we asked one commander he said one thing, then when we asked another commander he said something different. When we asked the Operations Commander he said we could be excused, but now we still must go as porters or give money. We have been trying to solve this problem for our people ever since Division 44 first arrived *[the start of the occupation in 1997]*, right up until now *[now Division 22 occupies the area]*.

We cannot solve this forced labour problem, each day it gets harder and harder. Recently our people came to tell us about this problem again, but we don't know how to solve it.

Yesterday they were happy to see you because they wanted to ask you to help us think about it too. The people who have fled and come here don't want to stay here. They miss their homeland. Already after only two days, they want to return to their homes and gardens. They don't want to come to stay here but they must come because of the forced labour. If peace [*meaning lack of forced labour and abuse*] can be arranged in Burma, all of them will go back. But now there is no peace and our people cannot stay in our country. I hope the Thais will allow us to stay in Thailand and not make problems for us and we can have food to eat, but I don't know how to achieve this. Whenever anyone comes to ask me about what I will do for my people I can't answer them because I don't have any power. If I go to the Burmese leaders and speak with them it's about as good as farting in the wind. They don't respect the value of our words. In front of us they say yes to our requests, but behind our backs they say no.

Q: Do the KPA still ask the Dta La Ku people to become soldiers?

A: We don't hear about that anymore.

Q: I heard that the DKBA has arrived at Kwih Kalay. Is that true?

A: Yes, they came to Kwih Kalay and Tha Der Ko. Their leader is Commander Pa Ka. Pa Ka was a KNLA soldier before. Our guess is that they will arrive here, but we remember the KPA telling us that this area does not belong to the DKBA, that only the KPA can rule over this area. The KPA only travel together with the Burmese. But before that the DKBA said that they could rule over the entire territory of Burma. Recently the KPA told us that the DKBA can come to this area but they can only build pagodas and monasteries, they can't do any other work. Anyway, we can't understand the politics of it so we don't care what they do. The only thing we want is for them not to force our people to do labour more than we can tolerate. Now our people can't stay in the country because the Burmese told us that if we don't give them porters whenever they require them they will arrest people and make them be porters. If they arrest anyone to be porters they will never release them. Moreover, our people who came back from portering told us that they said if the Dta La Ku people don't go to be porters whenever requested then we can't stay in the country anymore.

Before there were only Burmese soldiers and KNLA soldiers, but then there was also the DKBA. After that the KPA came along as well, so the villagers are required to work more. When the DKBA came the villagers had to give them whatever they required. When the KPA came the villagers also had to give whatever they required. When the Burmese came the villagers had to start working for them. The villagers cannot tolerate all of this, so they've fled from their villages.

Q: Which Battalions of Burmese soldiers are staying in Kwih Kler and Taung Kalay?

Elder 1: Battalion #343. [*They control the area*] from Htee Hta Baw to Kwih Kler. The villagers which are below [*north of*] Kwih Kler are controlled by Division 22, Battalions #220 and #221. Starting above Saw Hta there is one Strategic Command with two battalions, and at Kwih Kler there is one battalion so there are three battalions in total. Now most of the soldiers are from Division 22. The Strategic Commander changes often. Until recently the Strategic Commander was Han Ti, but now he's been replaced by

Myint Myint Shwe. Now, we heard that Hla Tun has come to replace Myint Myint Shwe. There is no Battalion Commander in Kwih Kler. At the road junction near Ber Kler there is a Battalion Commander. His name is Ah Maung.

Elder 2: No, Ah Maung already went back so now only the Second in Command, Tin Kyai, is still there.

Q: How many soldiers are there in that battalion?

A: Approximately 100 soldiers. They stay in separate places; their usual places are the road junction near Ber Kler and at Htee Hta Baw. The Battalion Commander is at the road junction near Ber Kler, and the Second in Command is at Htee Hta Baw. Those two groups are from the same battalion but are living and moving separately now. One group patrols Yaw Ka Daw, K'Yeh Theh, Lay Wa Shu and Kyaw Kwa, and the other group patrols Maw, Meh Tharaw Hta, Kwih Lat Der and Kyaw Kwa. They meet at Kyaw Kwa. They haven't fought any battles. There was only one battle in K'Yeh Theh when Division 44 first came.

Q: If there is no battle, must the villagers go for portering?

Elder 1: In our village we always have to go portering.

A: We always have to go. If we didn't go and a battle suddenly occurred the villagers would be in trouble [*they'd be accused of supporting the KNLA*]. Before there were no KNLA soldiers around, but now there are KNLA soldiers living near us so a battle may happen. There are many KNLA soldiers around Kwih Lat Der and Maw.

Q: Where is your village?

Elder 1: Those of us who fled and came here are from Kwih Lat Der, Tee Ler Baw, Naw Po Hay, Taung Kalay, Maw, Meh Tharaw Hta, Meh Naw Dah Hta, Kwih Kler, Day Theray, Tee Po Khaw, Meh T'Lah, Meh Gu, Meh Kwih May, Kyaw Kwa, Kru Tu Kee, Kler Ta Gu and Du Yaw. Not all the people from these villages have come to live here, only some from each village, but the villagers who are left in the villages hope to come here. Our friends want to come here when they get into trouble because the Dta La Ku religious place is here at Lay Taw Ko.

Elder 2: Usually we come to our religious centre once or twice a year to worship. When we get into trouble and we cannot stay in our own village we also come here. There is nowhere else for us to go. We can only come to our religious centre, even if we can't bring enough food to eat.

A: The reason why the people from Kru Tu Kee and Kler Ta Gu cannot stay in their villages is because they don't have time to do their own work. Each of these villages had to provide 100 baskets of paddy seed and sow it for the Burmese. They had to plough, sow, harvest and pound the paddy, they had to do everything. All of the rice that is produced from the 100 baskets of seed must be given to the Burmese soldiers. They don't have time to do their own work so they couldn't tolerate staying there. That is happening in Kru Tu Kee, Lay Tai and Kler Ta Gu, in Kawkareik township. People from these villages all came and said the same things. The villagers must give all of the rice to the Burmese soldiers when they finish working their own fields.

Q: How many refugees are here?

A: 2,000 people have come, but only 900 of them are here in Lay Taw Ko. There are more than 900 refugees here, but they are not living here every day. They build their houses here but then they go back to their villages to farm, because we are worried that otherwise we won't have enough food for the coming year. If we put all the Dta La Ku people together from Taung Kalay, Kwih Lat Der and villages along the border, there are more than 2,000 of us. If they can't live there they will all come here. I don't know how long they will stay, but if there is peace in two or three days they will go back. They will not stay forever. If there is no peace for ten days then they will stay here for ten days, but until there is peace they do not dare to go back.

Elder 1: That 900 does not include all the people in my place. *[Many Dta La Ku have fled to the Thai border but are staying just on the Burma side, ready to flee into Thailand at any time. At the time of the interview 945 refugees had already crossed into Thailand.]*

Q: Can they farm here?

A: They cannot farm here because the forest land belongs to the *[Thai]* government, so those who are here go back to farm in their villages. When more people come I don't think they will be able to go back to farm in their villages anymore, so our people have a very big problem. I don't know how to solve this problem, the only solution I can think of is for all our people to hang themselves.

Q: We've heard that in Burma the students are shouting and the SPDC said that if the KNU give them all of their weapons then they will make peace in Burma. What do you think about that?

A: I can't understand politics and I don't know how reliable the Burmese are. If we look at Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been standing up for peace for almost ten years, they still haven't given her the peace she is asking for. In the past, the students and the monks stood up and many of them were hurt. I thought that the Burmese would change their laws after that but they still haven't changed them. Things are getting more difficult every day. Even the Burmese leaders capture each other and put each other in jail. If they can capture and imprison even the people who have authority, then how are the villagers supposed to tolerate them? That's why the villagers are fleeing from Burma. The problem is that the villagers can flee but they cannot eat. As for me, I can't do anything so we meet with our white younger brother here *[Karen way of referring to white foreigners]*. What will he do? If all of our people come to Thailand they will starve as soon as all their food is gone.

Q: Do you think the Thai government will make problems for you for speaking about this?

A: Why would they make problems, when the people have to flee because they don't dare to live *[in Burma]*? Even when they know that the Thais will make problems for them they still have to flee. When they fled and came here before and the Thai soldiers forced them to go back, because they are not allowed to stay, they went back and hid

themselves. In the past when the Dta La Ku people went to stay in Noh Po camp the Thai soldiers didn't allow them to stay there because the Dta La Ku people often have to return here to uphold their religious traditions, whereas refugees staying in Noh Po refugee camp cannot leave the camp. You can't get out of the camp once or twice a month, you must remain inside. So I don't know what to do. The villagers are going to flee and come here again. We are not sure whether the Thai soldiers will allow them to come here or not, but I'm sure myself that the Thai soldiers will not allow them to stay. I want to know what we can do to stop the Thai soldiers from coming here to block their arrival.

#7.

NAME: “Saw Meh Doh” **SEX:** M **AGE:** 44
Karen Dta La Ku farmer
FAMILY: Married, 3 children
ADDRESS: Kwih Lat Der village, Dooplaya District
INTERVIEWED: 9/98

[Kwih Lat Der is a Dta La Ku village adjacent to the Thai border in southern Dooplaya. Many Dta La Ku villagers have recently fled there, ready to flee into Thailand at any moment if necessary.]

I am the Dta La Ku religious secretary *[in the overall religious hierarchy]*. I came here to make preparations for my people. We have many people and we are in trouble. In the past we were under the control of the KNU, but when the Burmese soldiers came the KNU left the village. Now we have been under the control of the Burmese soldiers for two years, so I know all about the Burmese soldiers. The longer we live under the control of the Burmese soldiers the poorer we become. We don't have time to work on our farms. They always demand that we work for them, even though no KNU people come to our village. Now, the situation for the villagers is getting even worse because the KNU have come back again, and if the two groups fight it will create trouble for the villagers. We went to the *[SPDC]* commander and asked if the Dta La Ku people could be exempted from going as porters. They agreed once. Then we asked for that chance again but they never allowed it again, so now the Dta La Ku people must carry things as porters. Recently they demanded four Dta La Ku people or 80,000 Kyats from Kwih Lat Der area. *[The village was ordered to send 4 people at all times on a rotating basis, or pay 80,000 Kyats per month to be exempted.]* We begged them to be left to do our own work instead, so then they said they would accept two people and 40,000 Kyats.

When the KNLA came to our place, we became even poorer. When they came to our village we were supposed to report it to the Burmese soldiers. If we didn't report, the Burmese soldiers persecuted us, and if we went and reported it we got into trouble as well. Then when we asked the second time for the Dta La Ku people to be excused from portering, the Burmese soldiers said that the Dta La Ku people must not live in Burma. So we came here to escape their persecution for a short time, maybe for a year or so.

Q: If there is peace in Burma, would you go back?

A: We never wanted to leave our country. We had to leave our village because of the bad situation there. If there is peace in our country we will go back at once. If there was peace right now we would go back right now, and we could help to improve things. We could develop the country. We can do any work that does not violate our religious rules. We can beautify the land, work for the schools and do anything else that will improve the country. But we cannot do things such as going along with them to the front line and carrying their weapons and ammunition as porters. We begged them to excuse us from carrying their military supplies because it violates our religious rules. But in response they told us that we Dta La Ku people are irritants so we cannot stay in their country.

Q: Was it the KNU or the Burmese who said that the Dta La Ku people are irritants?

A: The Burmese! The Burmese. We can make friends with the KNU. They came to our village and told us that we Karen people must join hands together even though we are under the control of the Burmese. They said we must be clever, and although we are living among the Burmese we must remember that we are Karen and we must maintain our spiritual unity.

Q: Have the Burmese ever killed or abused any Dta La Ku people?

A: Yes, when Division 44 came they captured and beat some people. This man here, Pa D---, his son was captured and was almost killed but he escaped. This type of thing has happened to more people than we can count. The Burmese accuse them of being political activists and of working with the KNU.

“Pa Bway Htoo”: Pa Dee Maw, Pa Sho, Pa Glaw,... you can’t count them all. The Burmese received a message that there was one KNU member with long hair, dark skin and short. Then when they saw his [*pointing to Pa D---, who was sitting in the room*] innocent son on the way home from his work, the Burmese thought he looked like the person described in the message. So they captured him and tied his hands behind his back. His forearms were badly bruised and gouged.

A: They demanded food such as rice, but not pigs or chickens because we never have those [*Dta La Ku religious rules forbid eating any meat unless it has been hunted or trapped*]. Any time they ask for food 10 or 20 of us have to take it to them. If we didn’t give them the food they wanted they would persecute us.

“Pa Bway Htoo”: If we don’t have enough rice to give them the amount that they ask for we give them what we have. If we have more than enough rice we only have to give what they ask for. There’s never been a time when we didn’t give any of what they asked for. They abuse the porters, they force them to porter day and night. The porters must reach their destination on time or the soldiers hit them. The porters start to cough up blood. A few of the porters who had escaped and come back to Kwih Lat Der were vomiting up blood in front of me. Earlier this rainy season, not so many days ago, they also used two strong bullocks belonging to the Kwih Lat Der villagers. They abused those strong bullocks until they died on the journey.

A: We had to pay the Dta La Ku person who owned the bullocks to compensate him for the cost. Our friend had good strong bullocks but they used them until they were dead. So we went to the Battalion Commander to ask him to help us pay the cost of the bullocks to our friend. We said, “You used our friend’s bullocks until they died, so you must pay the cost of the bullocks.” He denied it and said, “Go back to your village and collect the money from your villagers for the cost of the bullocks”. We’d already had to give them money for porter fees, and then we had to give for the bullocks as well. So living becomes more difficult for us each day. Last summer, 10 or 20 villagers and myself had to follow them to the front line. My cousin Day Nya Pa had dysentery and stomach pains but he still had to keep on going. When we arrived at Yaw Ka Daw, I let

him go. It was good that I went along with them. The Burmese demanded people, and if I didn't provide them they would have captured them.

Q: How many groups of Burmese soldiers have stayed in your village?

A: They came in turns, sometimes Division 44 and sometimes Division 22, and their Battalions were #61, #62, #356 and #343 [*the first two are Infantry Battalions, the latter two Light Infantry Battalions*]. [*Division*] 44 was very rude. The Company Commander of [*Division*] 44 who made problems for our villagers was Aung Kyaw Nyunt, and their Battalion Commander was Than Lwin. They interrogated the villagers and ransacked our village looking for guns. We were afraid of them so we had to give them all of our guns. They captured Tho Meh and Ko Lone, tied them up and took them to their camp and interrogated them, so I had to go and save them. They also captured Maung Chet Yin, Pa Glaw, Pa Nyeh Maw, Uncle Maw Yeh Bo and Htoo Htoo. I was able to get these people released, but the Burmese soldiers wanted to tie me up at Kwih Kler camp so I had to give them all our guns, including guns that couldn't be used in battle [*hunting weapons*].

At that time Battalion #61 asked us to carry their things. They required 50 people from Kwih Lat Der. We Dta La Ku are obedient people. If they require a certain number of people we give that number. We don't want to cause problems. They forced us to carry cement, one bag per person. Each person had to reach the destination in the amount of time given. Everyone was very tired, some were even coughing up blood. Because of this, the Dta La Ku people fled from the village. [*This was the previous occasion when they fled the village, in late 1997; they later returned.*] Battalion 61 forced the people to do things and caused a lot of trouble for the people.

Another villager: Their Column Commander was Hla Win.

“Pa Bway Htoo”: The Battalion Commander was Kyin Lay Oo. The people were hurt a lot at that time. They had to carry cement at night, and they had to cross a river. One villager said that they couldn't cross the river because the water was too deep, but a soldier answered that he couldn't know that yet because he hadn't yet crossed the river, and then the soldier kicked the villager. Upon crossing the river some of the cement got wet and so the soldiers kicked and choked some of the villagers.

A: We had to carry it from Meh Tharaw Hta to Htee Hta Baw. That was the most difficult time for us. We fled from our village because of that. Then when we came here the Thai soldiers forced us back. The Thai soldiers said, “There is no battle. You come here too much. Go back. If there is a battle and the armies are shooting each other you can come here, but now there is no battle so go back.” At that time the KNLA was not around our village so there was no fighting, we were only being forced to do labour by the Burmese. We couldn't tolerate the forced labour. They didn't even give us any rice to eat.

Q: What were they going to do with the cement?

A: They were building their camp. When Battalion #61 left a new battalion, Battalion #62, came to replace them and they were less abusive. Their Battalion Commander, Tha

Win, talked to the villagers a little more nicely but we weren't released from doing forced labour. When Battalion #62 left, Battalion #343 came to replace them and they were bad. The Battalion #343 Commander was Aye Kyine. The company commander at our village was Nyo Nyo Mai. Their camp is at Htee Hta Baw, but their big camp is at the Ber Kler road junction.

Q: Do KPA soldiers ever come to Kwih Lat Der?

A: The KPA come with the Burmese. Battalion #343 has some KPA soldiers among them now. Over 10 KPA soldiers came to Kwih Lat Der together with the Burmese soldiers when they came. Last hot season *[March-May 1998]* Aung Tin Myint *[of the KPA]* asked us to become soldiers, carry guns and defend the village but we explained that we cannot wear trousers. *[This goes against Dta La Ku dress rules.]* Our sarongs are open sarongs *[wrapped around but not sewn shut to form a loop]* and we keep our hair in top-knots. We must not fight. We explained this to him many times, so finally he didn't force us to become soldiers but he still asked us to be soldiers. We fled again this time because we had to do forced labour. If we couldn't go we had to hire someone to go in our place, and that costs 100 Baht per day. Most people don't have enough money to hire anyone. Last year there were no KNLA soldiers around but this year they are also there, so we don't think we can stay in our village anymore. Two friends of ours had to go as porters and are still with the Burmese right now. We have to give money. Now they are asking for 40,000 Kyats. Last time they asked for 80,000 Kyats. *[They demanded 4 people or 80,000 Kyats, and since only 2 people have been sent they are still demanding 40,000 Kyats.]*

Q: Have all the people from Kwih Kler come to stay in Kwih Lat Der?

A: More than ten families *[just now; more had come earlier]*. Three or four Dta La Ku families are still left there but they're supposed to come. The reason that they are still in Kwih Kler is because we asked them to stay there as a base so we can travel easily. If they have trouble they will come here. We are in continual contact. Because they stay in Burma they will know what the Burmese are going to do. When they tell us, we can pass it on. The people from Kwih Kler and Kwih Lat Der have the same problems so we can flee together. Altogether over 40 families have come from Kwih Kler. Many Kwih Kler villagers fled to Kwih Lat Der last hot season. Now the Burmese soldiers have ordered them all to return to Kwih Kler or they will confiscate their land. The villagers do not dare to go back because they couldn't tolerate being porters. The villagers said that if they wanted to confiscate the land they can, but "we will never go back". The people from Kwih Kler have fields, gardens, and big houses but they left those to come here. In Kwih Kler they had to go as porters. If they didn't go they had to give money, but all of them had to go because they don't have any money.

Q: Do the people in Kwih Kler have to build car roads?

A: They haven't built the roads yet but they've already cleared the bushes and coconut trees to make way for the road *[a new route is reportedly being cleared to replace the existing rough road between Lay Po Hta, Kwih Kler and Saw Hta]*.

Q: Have you fled and come here or have you just come to visit?

A: I have two houses, one here [*in Thailand*] and one there. Many villagers from Kwih Lat Der, Thay Baw Bwa Hta, Taung Kalay, Lay Toh Ray, Htee Po Khaw, Kwih Kler, Meh Naw Dah Hta and Ywa Thay have two houses each, one in their village and one here in Lay Taw Ko. If the Thai Army forces us back we go back to our villages, if the Burmese Army makes trouble for us we come here. All the Dta La Ku people plan to flee and come here because when we asked the Burmese commander to allow us to be exempt from being porters, because it is against our religion, the Burmese said that the Dta La Ku people are troublemakers and they should leave Burma.

Q: How many houses are there in Kwih Lat Der?

A: There are 50 houses in Kwih Lat Der village now. Most of the houses belong to Dta La Ku people, only 10 of the 50 houses belong to Buddhists. All of the people are still in the village. After we finish preparing things for them here we will go back and get everyone else. I think that everyone will flee in about one week. We must leave our homes behind when we come. Now everyone is working on their fields, and we are very sad that we must leave our fields because the Burmese tell us that Dta La Ku people must not stay in the area. We are the leaders of our people so we must think a lot in order to take care of them. We are happy to meet you and to tell you about our plan. The Dta La Ku people need food and medicine.

Q: Can the villagers go back from here to harvest their paddy?

A: They've already finished sowing their paddy, and they also have gardens of chillies, vegetables and fruit. I don't know. We don't dare to go back after fleeing this time because we've already fled three times. We hope that the UN will help prevent the Thai Army from forcing us to go back and from abusing us while we're here.

Q: Why can't you go and stay in Noh Po refugee camp?

A: We Dta La Ku people are not the same as other people, so we can't go to stay in Noh Po. Because of our religion we must always come here, to Lay Taw Ko, to stay. When we fled this time our elder went to Noh Po refugee camp and planted some rice for us. [*Actually he arranged for rice deliveries from foreign Non-Governmental Organisations.*] We had to carry the rice from Ber Kler, but we didn't get enough. It was only enough for a few days. We don't have any rice now because this is not harvest time yet. The paddy plants are still too young, we cannot harvest yet.

Q: Now the SPDC says that if the KNLA gives in all their weapons then they will make peace. Do you believe that?

A: I can't believe that, because I saw the Mon people surrender once and they never made peace with them [*referring to the Mon ceasefire in 1995, after which the Mon people have continued to suffer intensive forced labour and abuse by the SPDC*]. After that some KNU people surrendered and then they made them become the DKBA [*this actually occurred before and at the same time as the Mon ceasefire*]. There is still no peace. So I know that if you give them all of your weapons then there will be no peace at all.

#8.

NAME: "Pu Bway Doh" **SEX:** M **AGE:** 82
Karen Dta La Ku farmer
FAMILY: Married, 6 children
ADDRESS: Meh T'Lah village, Dooplaya District
INTERVIEWED: 9/98

[When interviewed "Pu Bway Doh" had already been staying in Thailand for 2 years, but had just returned from a trip back to visit his village.]

I am 82 years old. I have 6 children. I have granddaughters and grandsons, some of my granddaughters are already married but not my grandsons. I already have great grandchildren. When the British ruled over Burma I was already a teenager. That was a long time ago, now I am close to dying. I came with two of my daughters' families two years ago. Over 20 families from Meh T'Lah already came to stay here four years ago. There are 40 houses in Meh T'Lah, so there are 40 families there. All of them are Dta La Ku. But I have pain in my feet because of my age, so I can't go back again. *[At the time of the interview he had just returned from a visit back to his village.]*

Q: Why don't you stay in your own village?

A: I don't dare to go back and live there because there is too much forced labour. People must porter for the Burmese. The porters must be changed every five days *[they have to go for 5-day rotating shifts]*. The Burmese camp is in Kalay Kee. Some people can walk there in one hour. I never counted, so I don't know how many soldiers are there. They are all from one battalion, but I don't know the battalion number.

Q: Usually, how many people must go to be porters for each trip?

A: Two people from Meh T'Lah, two people from Lay Taw Hta and two people from Khaw Wah Kloh. Each person must go for five days. They must carry shells and ammunition to Kyaikdon, nine or ten shells together with some rice in each basket. There is a car road but the car cannot come. We don't dare to stay in the village unless some of us go as porters. If we don't go they will come to capture us, and if they capture us they will never release us. So we go any time we are ordered. Would you dare to stay there without going?

Q: Other than being porters do the villagers have to do anything?

A: Now the Burmese are in many places such as Kho Chaw and Noh Ler Kloh. They are building roads. The Burmese won't use the roads that were built by the English, but they do use roads that were built by the Japanese. They forced the villagers to build a fence that goes further than from here to Kwih Kler! *[7 or 8 hours' walk away, about 20 km.]* The villagers must weave bamboo to make the fence along both sides of the road. About one hundred people were building the fence every day.

Now the KNLA soldiers have come around again, and the Burmese soldiers try to shoot at them. One villager died. The Burmese had exchanged fire with the KNLA, but no villagers were injured. Then later they captured a villager on the path to Noh Pa Wah, and they saw some medicine in his bag so they shot him dead on the path. The Burmese soldiers shot him dead. *[Villagers are occasionally executed for possession of medicine, on the grounds that the SPDC suspects the medicine could be intended for KNLA soldiers.]* His name was Maw Lu Bu and he was about 20 years old. He wasn't married yet. They shot him when I was back there, not even a month ago. They killed him near the pond between Meh T'Lah and Khaw Wah Kloh. They killed him just because they saw medicine in his bag.

Q: Was that boy using the medicine to help the Karen soldiers?

No, he used the medicine to treat the villagers.

Another villager: They don't allow people to become medics. They want people to go to them whenever they are sick, but the people don't have money to go to them. That boy was just a villager. *[SPDC will not allow villagers in areas like this to receive medical training in order to prevent them from being able to treat Karen soldiers.]*

A: After that the KNLA came to chase them. When the KNLA came the Burmese were still near the pond, so the Karen soldiers attacked with their heavy weapons and three Burmese soldiers died.

There are Burmese soldiers and KNLA soldiers there now. The villagers told the KNLA not to come because the Burmese were close by, but they never listen and they came anyway. When the KNLA come we have to feed them and it costs us about 300 or 400 Kyats. There are 50 of their soldiers there, and sometimes they came every day. The KNLA soldiers demand one big tin of rice from each of the 40 families every two or three weeks. They don't usually come to get the rice, the villagers must carry the rice to them.

Q: Do the KPA come to your village as well?

A: There are some KPA soldiers among the Burmese soldiers. I know the commander of the KPA. But the DKBA have not come to my village, and the KPA only came when I went back last time. The Burmese and the KNLA soldiers are there, but not so near our village, they are 10 furlongs from us *[just over a mile]*. They don't come often. Before they shot Maw Lu Bu they hadn't come for two months. When they came there were some KNLA soldiers in one of the houses in the village. The Burmese soldiers asked a woman if any KNLA soldiers were in the area, but she said that there were none because

she didn't know. Just after asking the woman the Burmese passed through the village and then the KNLA shot at them. So later the Burmese said that if they came again they would burn down all of Khaw Wah Kloh village.

Q: In your area, can the farmers stay at their field huts when they're farming?

A: No, they cannot sleep in their field huts, they have to get a pass which allows them only one or two days *[at their fields]*. If the Burmese see you in the jungle without a pass they capture you. We can only take two or three pots of rice *[to the field huts; this is limited by SPDC to prevent rice being given to the KNLA]*. We can't take a lot of rice. When they see people they don't do anything if they have a pass, but with the pass you can only sleep at most three nights in your fields and then you must return. We don't have to give money for the passes, because we get them from the village headman. They give the village headman a notebook and he has to make the passes for us.

Q: Do the Burmese force the villagers to relocate in your area?

A: The Burmese forced the villagers to Bee T'Ka, not to the jungle. Only Meh T'Lah village had to relocate. For people who can walk quickly, it takes about one hour *[to walk from his village to Bee T'Ka]*. I haven't counted the houses in Bee T'Ka, but the village is very big, maybe about 100 houses. The children and everyone went there, nobody was left in the village. They were living there for a few months and then they came back again, and now they're back in the village. They returned because when they were in the relocation place *[Bee T'Ka]*, the KNLA ordered them to return to their own village or else they would shoot at them with their heavy weapons. The KNLA said that all the villagers must go back to their village or they would shoot all of them dead. Then they fired off their heavy weapon, DOME! DOME! And the villagers were afraid, so they returned. After that the Burmese soldiers forced the villagers all to move into Meh T'Lah *[into the centre of the village itself, rather than living scattered in the outskirts and in their field huts]*, but the elders told them that if they went there they wouldn't be free of the KNLA, so he said they would go to Lay Taw Ko or Kwih Lat Der instead. Now the people are afraid and are going to flee. *[They must flee because now they face punishment by the SPDC for leaving the relocation site and staying around in the fields, while the KNLA will punish them if they return to the relocation site. The KNLA wants them back in the village because they need them as a source of food and intelligence.]*

Q: Can the villagers still live in your village or will they come here?

A: The villagers will come. Now they will come. They will come because they cannot tolerate being porters anymore. When I came back, there were many Burmese soldiers along the way. They were going to Kyaikdon to get their rations. Whether or not the Burmese give them passes, the villagers will come. If they want to kill us we will die, but we will not stay there anymore because if we stay there we will lose our spirits.

#9.

NAME: "Pa Boh" **SEX:** M **AGE:** 38
Karen Animist farmer
FAMILY: Married, 1 daughter and 3 sons
INTERVIEWED: 9/98
ADDRESS: K'Neh Thay Po Lay village, Meh K'Lah, Kawkareik township

["Pa Boh" is from the 'hump' of Dooplaya which sticks out into Thailand. The DKBA is still in this area. His village is a 4-6 hour walk from the Thai border.]

Q: Where is your village?

A: I live in Ka Neh Thay Po Lay village. I came here through the mountains. There are 6 or 7 families still left in my village.

Q: Have the Burmese arrived at your village?

A: Yes, they come but they only stay a short time. They usually come once a week or once every 10 days. They don't make trouble for the villagers because the DKBA are there. They don't steal or enter the village because the DKBA are in the village. In the past they came and stole the chickens and the pigs. When they went into houses they took whatever they wanted. But now they don't do anything to us because the DKBA are living in the area. The DKBA are in Kyo G'Lee, about 1 hour from our village. The Burmese don't cause any trouble when the DKBA are living in the area. The DKBA help the villagers with problems, but the Burmese only threaten to beat and arrest the villagers. I don't know the Burmese battalion number, but someone told me that they are Battalion #32. I don't know the name of their commander though.

Q: Did the Burmese ever arrest people?

A: They usually didn't arrest anybody because the DKBA prevented it [*while the DKBA were around*]. The DKBA told them that they should only deal with the fighting and that has nothing to do with the villagers. They said we are innocent farmers who go to our farms and come back every day, so the Burmese didn't do anything against us. Once they captured me, my mother-in-law, my brother-in-law, my cousin and another person from another village whom I didn't know. That was when people were sowing paddy [*in June*]. We were taken to Kyo G'Lee and held captive for 5 days. They put us in a shelter and locked our legs in stocks. They tied our hands behind our backs tightly so we couldn't lie down or move, so we had to stay like this [*he demonstrated that he could only sit with his legs in the stocks and his hands behind his back, he couldn't lie down*]. They accused us of being in contact with the KNU and of having a radio and weapons. They asked us to give them the weapons but we couldn't give them what we didn't have. They asked us to look for the weapons and the radio. How could we find those? We couldn't find anything. That's the reason they beat us. The Burmese put something on my back and then stepped on me. They beat my head with the butt of their gun, *taw! taw!* [*imitating the sound*]. I was bleeding from three cuts on my head. They beat me a few times each day. They finally released us because the DKBA came and asked them to release us, and we returned to our wives and children. The DKBA had been living in Wah Lay but then they came to our village when the Burmese captured us.

Q: When they captured you, what else did they do in the village?

A: They took money, 45,000 Kyats, and home-made hunting weapons from the villagers. Later the DKBA asked the Burmese to return the money to the villagers and it was returned. They didn't destroy our homes but they took any food they found in our houses, such as salt, Ajinomoto [*MSG seasoning*] and shrimp paste. They took everything they found. They also took rice, though they left some behind for the owner. All the men ran to the jungle. Only the women and children stayed in the village. All of the villagers from Meh K'Lah Kee [*a village very near to his*], about 6 families, are still living in the jungle. The Burmese soldiers told them to go live in Kyo G'Lee or K'Neh Thay Po Lay. The DKBA said that if they wanted to go back to Meh K'Lah Kee to farm their fields they could, but that was only a DKBA plan, if the Burmese knew about it they wouldn't allow it.

Q: Do KNLA soldiers ever come to your village?

A: Yes, they come. Once when the Burmese and KNLA soldiers met unexpectedly they fired at each other. There are still KNLA soldiers in xxxx village but the DKBA and the Burmese aren't there. We heard that the KNLA and the DKBA fight but I have never seen it. The KNLA and the Burmese do fight.

Q: Have any villagers stepped on landmines recently?

A: No one has stepped on landmines recently, but in May my cousin Saw Lay Htoo, Ka Lu Po, Naw Kyaw Ta and Mu Dwaw stepped on a Burmese landmine in Kyo G'Lee village. Ka Lu Po died immediately and Saw Lay Htoo died later in the Mae Sot hospital. The other two only sustained injuries. Saw Lay Htoo was 33 years old. He was married with two children but one of his children had already died. A landmine exploded in K'Neh Thay Po Lay village after I was arrested and injured one of my uncles, Pa Haw. People carried him to Kyo G'Lee village and the Burmese injected him with medicine but he died soon after. He was 50 years old and had a wife and children. Nobody goes to their farms on that path anymore, people must take a different path, a car road. The Burmese put landmines on the paths, beside the paths and on the oxcart tracks.

Q: In your village, can people now sow paddy?

A: Yes, they can sow paddy. They can sleep in their field huts, the DKBA allow that. We don't let the Burmese know about that, because if the Burmese knew they wouldn't allow us. Also, whenever the Burmese are going to the frontline and are planning to capture people as porters, the DKBA tell us to run away and sleep in the jungle. The DKBA told us that as long as they are around our village we can stay like this.

Q: In your village do the villagers have to do labour for any of these groups?

A: We have never been porters for the KNLA or the DKBA but we have been for the Burmese. I carried one basket of rice for the Burmese soldiers from Kyo G'Lee to Klih Hta over the mountains. My back got wounded. Each person from my village had to porter two or three times. Anytime they required us we had to go. Sometimes from K'Neh Thay Po Lay to Kyo G'Lee and sometimes from Kyo G'Lee to Th'Waw Thaw [known in Burmese as *Sakan Thit*]. There are Burmese soldiers in Th'Waw Thaw. I'm not sure how many, maybe 200 or 300 soldiers.

Q: Do the Burmese soldiers still receive rations?

A: I think they have food but I'm not sure because I've never been to their place. They brought their own food to the village when they came, but they still demanded rice, salt, shrimp paste and Ajinomoto from the villagers.

Q: Can the children in your village go to school?

A: At first the Burmese established a school and the children went to school, but later all the students quit because the Burmese teachers beat them and yelled at them, so there was no school. There is no school in Kyo G'Lee or Th'Waw Thaw either, so my children haven't been able to go to school. I thought I might send my children to school in Thailand.

Q: Do you think the DKBA is good for Buddhists? Do they ask anyone to become soldiers?

A: The DKBA allows us religious freedom. In Kyo G'Lee area I am Animist, some people are Christian and some are Buddhist. The DKBA hasn't asked people to become soldiers but if anyone wants to become a soldier they can.

Q: Now the Burmese have said that if the Karen give them all of their weapons they will make peace. Do you believe that?

A: I can't believe that. It's not easy to live with the Burmese. We don't like living under the rule of the Burmese. We hope that the KNLA will rule over the area as before. If they treat us with medicine and administer the villages properly like they did before, we would be very happy. I can believe in the KNLA. I hope for their help and I like them. But because there are Burmese soldiers in the area now, we are afraid when the KNLA come and show themselves. They have to come secretly and we understand each other. We hide the KNLA soldiers. If the Burmese soldiers saw us with the KNLA they would kill us. As we are just villagers, we have no weapons and anyone can defeat us. We haven't seen the DKBA and the Burmese working together but we have seen them walking together. I also trust the KNLA more than the DKBA. I've been under the rule of the KNLA since I was young.

Q: Are there many ill people in your village now?

A: Yes, many people are sick, they are coughing a lot. Some also have diarrhoea. They can't find any medicine. Two people have already died, a 2-year-old girl died ten days ago and another child died about a month ago. They both died of diarrhoea, which they'd had for almost two months. They wouldn't have died if they'd had medicine. In the past, children in Kyo G'Lee *[area]* who had medicine didn't die from this. We don't dare ask for medicine from the Burmese and we wouldn't dare to take any medicine if they gave it. Even the DKBA don't dare to take the medicine of the Burmese, and they don't like us to take that medicine either. Even if the DKBA wanted us to take the Burmese medicine we wouldn't dare to take it. I know of two people who died from Burmese injections. One was my uncle, Pa Haw, and the other was a patient's child who was 4 to 6 years old. We are able to produce enough rice for each year, what we can't produce is medicine. We don't have any medicine and there is nobody to treat us. The Burmese took all the medicine that we'd bought in Klaw Taw *[a border village in Thailand]* when they captured us.

Q: Does the KNLA still help you?

A: Yes, they do. Just after we were injured from being beaten by the Burmese, the DKBA rescued us. They said that they didn't have enough medicine and that we should go to the KNLA for treatment. When the others *[who were released]* met with our brothers *[the KNLA]*, they received medical treatment and they got better.

Q: Have you come here to visit? Will you go back?

A: I will return to my village because my family is there. I came here to see a doctor, because there are no hospitals in Kyo G'Lee or Th'Waw Thaw. When people get sick they must be sent to the hospital in Mae Sot *[Thailand]* via Wah Lay, or they may die.

When we go, we go to Dr. Cynthia's clinic [*a free clinic for refugees*] so that we only have to pay for the bus. The DKBA allow us to go but we don't let the Burmese know. Now my wife also has a problem. She is pregnant and not well. She has a poor appetite, numbness in her legs and she can't walk properly.

NAME: "Saw Kler Eh" **#10.** **SEX:** M **AGE:** 53
Karen Buddhist farmer
FAMILY: Married, 3 children aged 13 and above
ADDRESS: Saw Hta village, central Dooplaya district
INTERVIEWED: 9/98

[*"Saw Kler Eh" was interviewed while visiting a refugee camp in Thailand.*]

Q: Are you married?

A: Yes. My first wife was taken by the [*village*] chairman, Pan Laung. The chairman is my cousin and wanted my wife so I said, "If you want my wife, take her." She is his second wife. He did love his first wife, Naw Klo Mo, but when he took my wife he said he didn't love his first wife anymore and he sent her away. My first wife and him are staying together in Saw Hta. I took this skinny woman to be my new wife. She was Pa Pler Ko's wife but he already died. I have had no children with my second wife, but I had 3 children with my first wife. I came here to get treatment for my wife. She has become very thin and medicine in Saw Hta is very expensive. Medicine at the hospital in Saw Hta costs 100 Kyats so we could only take it once or twice. They don't have enough nurses in the hospital in Saw Hta. The two villagers that are nurses there are Thra Aung Kyi and Naw Mo Lo. There is no government hospital in Saw Hta. The Burmese have a clinic there, but nobody goes there.

Q: Did the Burmese come to your village sometimes?

A: Yes, they have a camp near the church in Saw Hta. The village has over 100 houses, and they are near the entrance to the village. They call their camp Byu Ha Gone [*Tactical Command Hill*]. I always stayed at home to do my work so I didn't have a chance to observe them. They rotated their troops very often so I don't know their battalion number or the name of their commander, but I do know they are from Division 22.

Q: Did you ever have to go for portering?

A: No, but the young men had to go to be porters. They collected porters often. The village headman told the villagers to be united and to go whenever it was demanded of us. They usually forced 20 porters to go each time, but sometimes they demanded fewer than that. The villagers always went when it was demanded of them. They went for one day and were forced to carry ammunition and military bags from Saw Hta to the Burmese camp in Kyaikdon. Some Burmese commanders told their soldiers that the porters had to carry very heavy things so the soldiers should carry their own boots. However, when the commander isn't looking the soldiers put their boots in the porters' baskets. Not all

people have the same heart. It's too bad that the porters have to carry such heavy things. I don't know if they beat or kick the porters, but their shoulders are always bruised.

Q: Do the porters get any food?

A: In the past they gave food to the porters. Before, when the villagers went to porter the Burmese asked the villagers to bring rice but they said no. The village chairman said, "You are forcing the villagers, so you must give food. If you don't give food, no one will go to porter." They used to give the porters the same food that they ate. Recently they called a meeting and told the villagers to bring their own food. Moreover, if the Burmese see the villagers' vegetables, bamboo shoots and pumpkins, they take them all. They even take all the leaves from the pumpkin plants.

Q: Do the Burmese force the villagers to do other labour?

A: Yes, the villagers are forced to do labour once a week. They start early in the morning and return after a few hours at 8 or 9 a.m. They don't go all day. The villagers were forced to clear and dig a road around the middle school. When villagers were disobedient, the Burmese would scold the village chairman but not cause any problems for the villagers. The village chairman told us we had to be united. Everybody had to work, including me. We had to prepare our own food in the village. We were always forced to work near the village. The young men had to build their camp and cut bamboo for them. Every morning they forced 2 ox-carts and 6 people to go to the Lah Ko river, near Saw Hta village, to send the bamboo to Byu Ha Gone. They went in rotation and if someone didn't go the Burmese wrote down their name and forced them to go later.

Q: Did the Burmese ever take the villagers' livestock?

A: When Division 44 came one or two years ago [*starting in March 1997*], they demanded the villagers' livestock. Their commander's name was Ohn Myint. Some soldiers didn't tell the villagers and just took their livestock. There were many soldiers who ate the villagers' livestock, so many of the villagers fled. I fled with my parents-in-law and many other villagers to Maw Kee and then to Htee Meh Baw Kee. My wife fled to Ber Kler. However, the Burmese met us in Htee Meh Baw Kee and drove us back to stay in our village. They told us to stay in our homes and that there was no need to flee. They said that they were not the same as the soldiers who had come before, but they were from Division 44 as before. As before, they ate the villagers' livestock. If the villagers didn't give them their animals when asked they shot them [*the animals*] with slingshots. No price was paid to the villagers. The villagers dared not say anything, and because there were so many soldiers their commander couldn't stop it either.

Q: When the Burmese came to the village, did they ever rape any of the women?

A: Last year a soldier from Division 33 raped Ma Shwe Kyain once. She, her child and her father were staying at home. He went to her house late at night when her husband, Wah Bu, had gone to cook because they were celebrating a school holiday. The child awoke and shouted to Ma Shwe Kyain's father that the Burmese had come to get her mother. When Ma Shwe Kyain's father woke, the Burmese showed him a hand grenade and he laid back down again. The Burmese demanded that she follow him to the bushes and then he raped her. I'm embarrassed to talk to you about this. He released her. The

next day people went to tell the commander and they found the soldier who raped the girl. They [*the officers*] tied him up and beat him. I don't know if he died or not, I didn't see it. Someone told me about it.

Q: Now do they still torture villagers?

A: I haven't heard of the troops that are there now torturing the villagers. Now they buy the villagers' livestock. When they ask for pumpkins and cucumbers from the villagers, the villagers must give them permission to take them or they are not allowed to eat them. If they steal the food, the villagers tell their commander and their commander punishes them. He would scold and beat them. The village headman told them that if they organise the villagers [*i.e. be nice to them and not abuse them*] they can get food from them easily, but that if they don't organise the villagers they won't get food from them.

Q: What do you do in your village?

A: I'm a farmer. Last year I produced over 100 baskets of paddy which is enough for us. I don't have to give paddy to the Burmese but I do need to buy expensive things in Saw Hta. One viss [*1.6 kg / 3.5 pounds*] of pork or fish costs 500 Kyats and chicken is 1,000 Kyats per viss. The other villagers and I can't afford to buy chicken.

Q: Will you go back to your village?

A: Yes, I will go back when my wife is better. I think she will be better in about 2 months. I have to go back because I have a farm and chickens there.

Field Reports

[The following summaries are from field reports filed by KHRG human rights monitors covering Dooplaya district. They are based on information and interviews from villagers as well as some KNLA intelligence information.]

January 6, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

SPDC commander Pyi Nyaing and his soldiers from Infantry Battalion 230 forced several villages to relocate to Thanbyuzayat and Pya Thon Zu [*Three Pagodas Pass*] within three days. The following villages were forced to move: Meh K'Naw, Meh K'Wa, Htee Kay, Htee Klih Thu, Lay Mai, Htee Po Yu, Ah Pa Lone, Lay Po, Hsing Pyay, Kwih Per Htee and Maw Po. They frightened the villagers by telling them they would capture those who didn't go to the relocation site and burn their houses. They burned 2 or 3 houses from each of the villages.

They burned down 2 villages, Htee Maw Keh and Meh K'Naw. In Meh K'Naw they burned 31 houses and 31 rice barns, and there were 1,340 baskets of rice in those rice barns. The villagers separated and 4 families went to Kyaut Ber Lu village, 6 families went to Kone Kaing village, 10 families went to Than Ber Yah village and some went to Taung Zone. They didn't have enough food and wanted to return to their village. They asked the chairman of the village tract to ask Pyi Nyaing, whose camp is in Meh Za Lee, for permission for the villagers to return to the village. Pyi Nyaing gave them permission so they returned to their villages and began working on their farms, fields and yards again. However, they have to give porter fees and go for forced labour every 3 days. Those who can't go for forced labour must pay 1,000 Kyats.

January 17, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

Infantry Battalion 230 Battalion 2nd-in-command of Column 2, Pyi Nyaing, sent a message from Taung Zone army camp to the Maw Gkeh village headman on 8/1/98. The message ordered all the villagers from Maw Gkeh, Meh K'Naw, Meh K'Wah, Htee Klay Thu and Hsing Pyay villages to relocate to Taung Zone in the period between 8/1/98 and 15/1/98. He threatened that he would burn down the villages if the villagers didn't relocate. On 9/1/98 he sent another message to the village headman threatening to shell the village if they didn't relocate. When the villagers heard that, they were afraid and didn't dare remain in the village. Some ran to the jungle and kept their belongings that they couldn't take with them in the monastery.

At 1 p.m. on 17/1/98 Battalion 2nd-in-command Pyi Nyaing from column 2, Infantry Battalion 230 and his soldiers entered Meh K'Naw and Htee Maw Gkeh villages and burned down all of the uncompleted houses. They then went to burn down the monastery and a monk begged them not to burn it. They ignored the monk and burned the monastery. They also captured 3 Meh K'Naw villagers who had gone to weed their gardens. They tied their hands behind their backs and beat them. Following that, they took them to Taung Zone camp and forced them to porter. The Meh K'Naw village

headman went to Pyi Nyaing and told him to release his villagers but Pyi Nyaing didn't release them. He used them as porters for 14 days and released them at Azin [*Saw Hta*] village, Kaw Ta Kha area [*central Dooplaya*].

Because of the forced relocation, some of the villagers were hiding in the jungle. Those who went to the relocation site had to do forced labour and porter for the SPDC army. They weren't free to do their own work. Those who are living in the jungle didn't dare to work on their farms because they were afraid so they didn't have enough food to eat. Many of them died.

February 4, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

On 21/5/97 villagers from Thu Taw, Way T'Lay, Thaw Saw and Tha Ger Yait villages were relocated to Beh Hla Mu [*a.k.a. Gker*] and Kaneh Kamaw which are close to a car road on which the villagers were forced to work [*the Ye-Thanbyuzayat road*]. In the relocation sites, the villagers had to pay 100 Kyats to obtain a pass so they could go to work in their fields. Many of the villagers left secretly to work in their fields. On 4/2/98 the SPDC Infantry Battalion 106 soldiers who were under the command of the Battalion 2nd-in-command searched the fields, gardens and farms. They burned down every shelter and farmfield hut. They shot the animals that the farmers were rearing and told the farmers who had fled the relocation site that the next time they saw them they would kill them. The farmers who were arrested were forced to porter.

March 30, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya; see also Interview #2 above)

Fifty soldiers of Light Infantry Battalion 357 under the supervision of Commander Than Shwe were involved in a small battle with some KNLA troops at Keh Toh Hta, Win Yaw township, which is near the road between Three Pagodas Pass and Thanbyuzayat. After the battle was over the SPDC soldiers started to clear the area. They went to a place one hour from where the battle had occurred and saw two Kone Kan villagers, Daw Naw Naw and her husband. Without any questioning they shot Daw Naw Naw dead. She was 21 years old and 7 months pregnant. The soldiers took her watch after they killed her. Her husband was shot in the hand and ran to escape.

April, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

In April 1998, Company Commander Kyi Swe from Company 2 of Light Infantry Battalion 357 and 30 soldiers entered Kone Kan village, Ye township. They captured U Taw Ga, Saw Chit Po and Saw Koh Po and accused them of being in contact with the KNU. When the villagers said that they had never contacted the KNU, the SPDC soldiers beat them until blood was running from their heads and mouths. The SPDC soldiers asked them to give them guns but the villagers said they had no guns to give. The soldiers took them to Taung Zone camp and locked them in stocks for two nights. After the village headman of Kone Kan village spoke on behalf of the villagers they were set free.

April 4, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

Fifty soldiers from Column 1, Infantry Battalion 231, supervised by Lt. Colonel Aung Kaing, entered Hleh Ku village, Win Yaw township, and took retail items from U Saw Hlaing's shop. They took 3 chickens and 1 duck valued at 1,500 Kyats, and 4 shirts and 2 bags valued at 8,000 Kyats from Daw Mo Grih's shop. They also took 800 Kyats worth of other retail items. All things were taken without being paid for.

April 6, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

Lt. Colonel Aung Kaing from Column 1, Infantry Battalion 231, and 50 soldiers entered Kyaut Bilu village, Win Yaw township. They gathered the villagers in the monastery of Ywa Lon Kut and forced the villagers to drink an oath of loyalty. They threatened that if anyone didn't drink they would be seen as KNU and punished. The villagers had to promise, "I will be loyal to the SPDC country and army. If I break my promise may I suffer many dangerous problems." The villagers had to make the promise and drink because they were afraid of the SPDC.

May 17, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

Fifty soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion 357, Column 1, under the supervision of 2nd Battalion Commander Than Shwe captured U Yah Bu, Maung Shwe Thein, Maung Hla Shwe, Maung Hla Than, Saw Beh Bet, Saw Kyaw Ku, Pay Ta Yoat, Pah Pee Li, U Merhuya, Saw Myint Thein and U Kyaw Kwa for no reason while they were clearing the scrub around the soldiers' temporary camp at Meh Za Lee village, Kya In township. They sent the above villagers to their commander, Than Shwe, and they were accused of being in contact with the KNU. They were abused in many ways on that day. On 18/5/98 twenty villagers went to the army camp and spoke on behalf of the arrested villagers. The captured villagers were then released.

May 23, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

Company Commander Zaw Myo Htun of Company 4, Infantry Battalion 61, and 18 soldiers entered Beh Hla Mu village, Ye township. They forced the villagers to give them one pig, one basket of rice and 15,000 Kyats without any reason given.

May & July 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

On 24/5/98 the Column 2, Company 4 commander, Min Nweh, and 100 soldiers who were under battalion commander Kyi Htun of Column 1, Light Infantry Battalion 209, from Tactical Command #2 of Military Operations Command Headquarters #12 entered Lay Wah Ploh village. They asked the villagers if they had seen the KNLA. Some villagers told them that they had seen KNLA soldiers at the foot of the mountain. On 25/5/98 the soldiers went to the foot of the mountain where the KNLA were and a battle occurred. After the short battle was concluded, the SPDC troops went to Lay Wah Ploh village and accused the villagers of helping and feeding the KNLA. They then ordered

the villagers to get out of the village by 26/5/98. On 27/5/98 the villagers left their houses, gardens, farms and fields and deserted the village. Some villagers went to stay in Kyun Chaung village. Because it was the rainy season, the villagers weren't able to take all of their belongings and livestock with them when they left the village so when the SPDC troops came to the village they looted what was left and shot the animals.

On 17/7/98 Light Infantry Battalion 209 Battalion Commander Kyi Htun entered Kyun Chaung village and saw Saw Ku Paw. He asked Saw Ku Paw, "Uncle, have you relocated from Lay Wah Ploh to Kyun Chaung?" After asking him, he tied Saw Ku Paw's hands behind his back and asked him where he kept the guns. Saw Ku Paw had no gun and told the commander that. He shouted at him, "Tell me the truth!" The commander then tied a plastic bag over his head and asked him again about the gun. Saw Ku Paw couldn't breathe and lost consciousness so Kyi Htun removed the plastic bag. When Saw Ku Paw regained consciousness Kyi Htun put the plastic bag over his head and continued questioning him until he again lost consciousness. Kyi Htun repeated this 3 times but Saw Ku Paw still said he had no gun. On 18/7/98 Kyi Htun took Saw Ku Paw to Meh Za Lee and interrogated him again. On 19/7/98 they took Saw Ku Paw to Lay Wah Ploh village and again interrogated him. Again they put a plastic bag over his head and then they beat him on the back twice with bamboo. They punched his face until both his nose and mouth were bleeding. Through all of that Saw Ku Paw's answer never changed, he still said he had no gun. After that they untied Saw Ku Paw and kept him in their army camp for two days. On 21/7/98 Saw Ku Paw was released and returned to Kyun Chaung.

June 1, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

Fifty soldiers from Column 1, Light Infantry Battalion 357, supervised by Commander Than Shwe, went and brought back a cow from Ah Pa Lon village, a goat from Meh Ta Bwee village and 60 batteries from Bon Kaw village back to their temporary camp at Meh Za Lee.

July 5, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

Saw Maw Paw, a 27 year old missionary from K'Mah Kler village, went to Noh Maw Bu village, Dooplaya district, to buy some pigs for rearing. On his way he met second-in-command Pyi Nyaing who supervises the K'Mah Kler army camp. When Saw Maw Paw finished buying his pigs, he returned home safely. Later Pyi Nyaing returned to K'Mah Kler also and on his way there was a small battle between him and the KNLA. When he arrived at K'Mah Kler village he arranged for Saw Maw Paw to come to the village headman's house and accused him of being a KNU spy. Pyi Nyaing punched Saw Maw Paw three times in the face and beat his back with a rod until his back was bruised and had turned green.

July 9, 1998 (Central Dooplaya)

SPDC commander Soe Nyunt and his soldiers entered Thih Kweh village, Kaw Ta Kha area, and stopped at the church. They broke open the church's strong box and took 5,000 Kyats along with all the plates, spoons, tablecloths and one cassette player with 2 speakers.

August 11, 1998 (Northern Dooplaya)

Between 4 p.m. on 11 August and 8 a.m. on 12 August the battalion commander, Soe Aung, from SPDC Division 44, Light Infantry Battalion #3, and 100 of his soldiers plus 3 members of the DKBA, Htun Maung and two of his friends, left their Division camp in Thingan Nyi Naung and burned down a village which lies between Noh Po and Htee Mu Hta in Kawkareik township. 90 houses and 3 rice barns were burned with a total value of approximately 1,000,000 Kyats. The soldiers threatened to kill the homeless villagers if they went to another village. Later the SPDC soldiers who burned the houses and rice barns went to the villagers and apologised for what they had done.

August 18, 1998 (Southern Dooplaya)

Battalion Commander Myo Kyin of Column 1, Light Infantry Battalion 355, entered Bee Saing village, Ye township, and captured all the chickens and ducks to eat. They also forced the villagers to give them 12 baskets of rice. On the same day the village headman provided 5 villagers for portering, but they took only 3 porters and asked for 1,500 Kyats to release each of the other 2 porters.

They stayed for 4 months and during that time the village headman had to provide 3 porters and 3,000 Kyats every five days. During their 4 months in the village the villagers had to provide them with 70,000 Kyats worth of alcohol and tobacco.

September 24, 1998 (Central Dooplaya)

On 24/9/98 Maung Htun Lin, a buffalo trader from Kya Ka Chaung village, Kya In township, went to Thailand to sell his 22 buffaloes. When he arrived at Khaw Ta Kha area there were SPDC soldiers collecting taxes at the gate. He gave the tax for his buffaloes to Kun Aunt Thwin and received a receipt. However, when he arrived at the Ber Kler SPDC check point, he was accused of not having paid the taxes and his buffaloes were confiscated by Commander Aye Kyaing of Light Infantry Battalion 343. Maung Htun Lin showed him the receipt proving he had already paid the taxes but the commander wouldn't take his receipt. Battalion Commander Aye Kyaing accused him of breaking the law by not paying the taxes and was going to fine him 20 million Kyats or put him in jail. Maung Htun Lin gave him 880,000 Kyats. Aye Kyaing also confiscated 70,000 Kyats from another trader without any reason. Aye Kyaing said, "Even though you have given us this money we have still taken a loss on our investment. Don't tell anyone what we have done to you or you can forget about ever trading your buffaloes here again. Now we will release you but you must come again on 28/9/98 to retrieve your buffaloes." Maung Htun Lin couldn't understand what the SPDC commander had done to him so he decided never to trade in buffaloes again.

Examples of Written SPDC Orders to Villages

Following are the direct translations of some SPDC written orders which were sent to villages in different parts of Dooplaya between December 1997 and July 1998. The names of the villages which received the orders and some other details are blanked out and replaced by xxxx where necessary to protect the villages involved. Copies of the Burmese originals of the orders are included on pages 85-90 of this report. The Order Numbers on the Burmese copies correspond to the numbers given on these translations. Please note that Burmese grammar is very different from English, so the phrasing of some of these translations may sound awkward because we have attempted to translate as directly as possible. Note that all numeric dates are in dd-mm-yy format.

Order #1

Stamp:

Frontline Light Infantry Battalion #357
Column 2
xxxx village

Date: 1-6-98
To: Chairman

To build Taung Zone camp, you are informed to come with (26) voluntary labourers with one bowl of rice each, to xxxx monastery on the 2nd at 8 o'clock without fail.

[Sd. / 1-6-98]

(for) Battalion Commander

Frontline #357 Light Infantry Battalion

[In this order the term 'loh ah pay' is translated directly, and it implies 'voluntary'; however, the labour is forced and not voluntary.]

Order #2

Stamp:

Frontline Light Infantry Battalion #208
Column 2 Headquarters

To: Chairperson
xxxx village
Kya In Seik Gyi township
Date: 18-7-98

Subject: Permanent rotation servants required

You the headperson are informed to send 5 permanent servants with their own rice to arrive today for the use of Frontline #208 Light Infantry Battalion, Column 2, and prepare to rotate the servants every 5 days.

[Sd.]

Column Commander

Column 2

#208 Light Infantry Battalion

[In SPDC written orders, porters are generally referred to as 'servants' (wontan).]

Order #3

Stamp:

Date: 1-6-98

Peace & Development Council
Dta Dan Gu village
QUICKLY)

(IMPORTANT - DO

To: Village Head
xxxx + yyyy villages

Subject: The voluntary labour carts must arrive

Regarding the above subject, according to the order from the Township, #12 Military Operations Command Headquarters requires cart porters urgently. Therefore, *[send]* 1 cart with 1 team of bullocks together with enough rations from each of your villages to

arrive at the Village Peace and Development Council office together at 4 o'clock this evening without fail, you are informed.

Note

Today, 1-6-98, Monday, at 4 o'clock in the evening they must arrive together. If there is failure and those from the Army camp come to arrest you, it will not be our responsibility. One village must give one bullock cart. Do it by drawing lots.

[Sd.]

Chairman

Peace & Development Council

Dta Dan Gu village, Kawkareik Township

Order #4

Stamp:

Village Peace & Development Council

Date: 12-5-98

Ye Township, Kyaung Ywa village

To: Chairman (xxxx village)

Subject: Requesting assistance with the servants' fees

Regarding the above subject, according to the agreement of the Kyaung Ywa village tract headmen and small village leaders, xxxx village is assessed (two thousand) for servant's fees. Therefore, [you] are informed to come and pay this money at Kyaung Ywa village.

[Sd.]

Member (1)

["Servants' fees" are more commonly known by villagers as "porter fees". They are not actually used for porters, it is simply a name used to extort money for the military.]

Order #5

Stamp:

Infantry Battalion #61

To: Chairman

xxxx village

Subject: Informing [you] to send logs

[You] are informed to send (30) logs, (6) inches in diameter and (8) feet in length, for repairs to the camp, to Kyaung Ywa camp before 25-1-98. If [you] fail to send [them], it will be the gentleman's [i.e. your] responsibility alone.

[Sd. / WO II]

Camp Commander

['WO II' means 'Warrant Officer 2'.]

Order #6

Stamp:

To: Chairman
Infantry Battalion #61
<xxxx village>
25-10-97

Subject: To repair camp buildings

According to the subject mentioned as above, the gentleman's village was informed to send wood by the 25th of the month, however no wood has been sent until now. Therefore, it is informed that the gentleman yourself should come and report to the camp commander what date you will send wood.

[Sd. / 25-10-97]

Kyaung Ywa camp

Order #7

Stamp:

Village Peace & Development Council
Date: 20-12-97
Ye Township, Kyaung Ywa village

To: Chairman / xxxx village

Lottery money should be sent to the Township soon, therefore you are informed to come and give money to Kyaung Ywa VPDC [*Ya Ah Pa, short for Village Peace and Development Council*] on 21-12-97.

[Sd. 'Htun Ye']

Chairman

Village Peace & Development Council

Ye township, Kyaung Ywa village

[This is just another way of taking money from villagers; the village elders are given a number of tickets and ordered to sell them and hand over the money, whether they can actually sell them or not.]