

Surviving in Shadow

**Widespread Militarization and the Systematic Use
of Forced Labour in the Campaign for Control
of Thaton District**



**Karen Human Rights Group
January 2006**

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Cover Photo: Villagers from Bilin township performing forced labour for the SPDC in November 2002. Colonel Min Aung Hlaing, commanding officer of Light Infantry Division (LID) #44, ordered these villagers to cut back the bushes for fifty feet [*15 metres*] on either side of the Bilin-Papun car road. It took them ten days to complete the work. [*Photo: KHRG*]

Rear Cover Photo: Villagers from Bilin township cutting back the brush from beside the Bilin – Papun car road for LID #44 in November 2002. The villagers were ordered to clear all trees, bushes, and scrub from within 50 feet [*15 metres*] of either side of the road to create wide ‘killing zones’ to protect SPDC Army units using the road from KNLA ambushes. [*Photo: KHRG*]

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Preface

This report examines the situation faced by Karen villagers in Thaton District (known as Doo Tha Htoo in Karen). The district lies in what is officially the northern part of Mon State and also encompasses part of Karen State to the west of the Salween River. Successive Burmese regimes have had strong control over the parts of the district to the west of the Rangoon-Martaban road for many years. They were also able to gain 'defacto' control over the eastern part of the district following the fall of the former Karen National Union (KNU) stronghold at Manerplaw in 1995. The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) is also strong in the district, particularly in the eastern stretches of Pa'an township. Although diminished in recent years, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the armed wing of the KNU, is still quite active in the district. The villagers in the district have had to contend with all three of these armed groups. The State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and DKBA demand forced labour, taxes, and extortion money from the villagers while also severely restricting their movements. While the demands for some forms of forced labour such as portering have declined over the past few years, the villagers continue to be regularly called upon by both the SPDC and the DKBA to expand the ever-increasing network of roads throughout the district, as well to fulfil the frequent orders to supply staggering quantities of building materials. A number of new SPDC and DKBA controlled commercial ventures have also appeared in the district in recent years, to which the villagers are also forced to 'contribute' their labour. In 2000, the SPDC confiscated 5,000 acres of land for use as an immense sugarcane plantation, while more recently in late 2004, the SPDC again confiscated another 5,000 acres of the villagers' farmland, all of which is to become a huge rubber plantation, co-owned and operated by Rangoon-based company Max Myanmar. In addition, the villagers are punished for any perceived support for the KNLA or KNU. All such systems of control greatly impoverish the villagers, to the extent that now many of them struggle just to survive.

Most villagers have few options but to try to live as best they can. SPDC control of the district is too tight for the villagers to live in hiding in the forest and Thailand is too far for most villagers to flee to. The villagers are forced to answer the demands of the SPDC and DKBA, of which there are many, while trying to avoid punishment for any supposed support of the resistance. They have to balance this with

trying to find enough time to work in their fields and find enough food to feed their families.

This report provides a detailed analysis of the human rights situation in Thaton District from 2000 to the present. It is based on 216 interviews conducted by KHRG researchers with people in SPDC-controlled villages, in hill villages, in hiding in the forest and with those who have fled to Thailand to become refugees. These interviews are supplemented by SPDC and DKBA order documents selected from the hundreds we have obtained from the area, along with field reports, maps, and photographs taken by KHRG field researchers. All of the interviews were conducted between November 1999 and November 2004. A number of field reports dated up until June 2005 have also been included.

The report begins with an Introduction and Executive Summary. The detailed analysis that follows has been broken down into ten main sections. The villagers tell most of the story in the main sections through direct quotes taken from recorded interviews. The full text of the interviews and the field reports upon which this report is based are available from KHRG upon approved request.

*Additional background information on the situation in this district can be found in **"Caught in the Middle: The Suffering of Karen Villagers in Thaton District"** (KHRG #99-07, 15/9/99), **"Thaton District: Continued Consolidation of SPDC and DKBA Control through the use of Forced Labour, Extortion and Movement Restrictions"** (KHRG #2005-F2, 21/2/05) and **"Thaton District: SPDC using Violence Against Villagers to Consolidate Control"** (KHRG #2001-U2, 20/3/01). Additional photographs related to the situation described in the report can be seen in **KHRG Photo Set 2005-A** (KHRG #2005-P1, 27/5/05), and **KHRG Photo Set 2002-A** (KHRG #2002-P1, 19/12/02). These are all available on the KHRG website (www.khrg.org).*

Notes on the Text

All names of people interviewed for this report have been changed and some details omitted where necessary to protect them from retaliation. False names are shown in double quotes; all other names are real. Where names have needed to be censored within quotes, they have been replaced by a string of letters, ie: 'aaaa', 'bbbb', etc.; in the same manner village names have been replaced with 'yyyy', 'zzzz', etc. Wherever a villager refers to a village that has been censored to 'xxxx', it may be implied that they are referring to their own village; all other strings may be taken to refer to villages other than their own. The captions under the quotes in the report include the interviewee's (changed) name, gender, age and village (although many of these have also been omitted), and a reference to the interview number. These numbers can be used to find the full text of the interview in the interview annex.

The text often refers to villages, village tracts, and townships. The SPDC has local administrations, called Peace and Development Councils (PDCs), at the village, village tract, township, and state levels. A village tract is a group of 5-25 villages centred on a large village. A township is a much larger area administered from a central town. The Karen National Union (KNU) previously organised Thaton (Doo Tha Htoo in Karen) District into five townships: Kyaikto, Bilin, Thaton, Pa'an and Paung, although this has now been reduced to four with the omission of Paung township. The official townships and village tracts used by the SPDC do not correspond to the KNU townships and village tracts: for example, Kyaikto township is listed as being in Mon State on SPDC maps. In this report we use the townships and village tracts as defined by the KNU because these are used by the villagers.

The villagers often refer to '**loh ah pay**' in the interviews. This Pali term is used for a traditional Burmese form of voluntary labour for the community, but the SPDC uses the term when calling for many forms of forced labour. For the villagers, the term has come to mean most forms of forced labour. '**Set tha**' means forced labour as a messenger at an SPDC Army camp. Other Karen, Burmese and Pali terms are explained where they occur in the text. Some of the more common terms can be found in the list of '**Terms and Abbreviations**' below. Villagers often refer to the KNU/KNLA as '**Kawthoolei**' (the name of the Karen homeland), the DKBA as '**Ko Per Baw**' ('Yellow Headbands'), and the SPDC Army soldiers and officials as '**the Burmese**' or '**the enemy**' (the latter is a habit they have picked up from the local KNLA). SPDC Army soldiers often accuse the villagers of being '**Nga**

Pway' ('Ringworm'); this is derogatory SPDC slang for the KNLA. Villagers, particularly those in the hills, do not keep track of dates and ages, and as a result sometimes different people give different dates for an event or different ages for the people involved. Whenever possible KHRG has attempted to establish and indicate the most accurate dates and ages. Villagers sometimes mention 'last year'; this often means the time before the latest (June-October) rainy season, rather than the previous calendar year. All numeric dates are in **dd/mm/yy** format.

Terms and Abbreviations

Military/ Political

SPDC	State Peace & Development Council; military junta ruling Burma
PDC	Peace & Development Council; SPDC local-level administration
VPDC	Village Peace & Development Council (abbreviated 'Ya Ya Ka' in Burmese)
TPDC	Township Peace & Development Council (abbreviated 'Ma Ya Ka' in Burmese)
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoration Council; former name of the SPDC until Nov. 1997
IB	Infantry Battalion (SLORC/SPDC); usually about 500 soldiers fighting strength
LIB	Light Infantry Battalion (SLORC/SPDC); usually about 500 soldiers fighting strength
SOC	Strategic Operations Command (SPDC/SLORC); 3-4 battalions, for defensive positions
Sa Ka Ka	Military Operations Command (SPDC/SLORC); 10 battalions, for offensive operations, may be deployed anywhere
Company	Military unit of about 100 soldiers, though often under-strength in SPDC Army
Column	Combination of Companies, assembled for operations; usually 100-300 soldiers
Section	Basic military unit of 10-11 soldiers
Tat Htain	'Military Police' (SPDC/SLORC)
Pytthu Sit	'People's Militia'; paramilitary militia recruited by the SPDC to serve as a home guard
Tha Ka Sa Pa	'Anti-Insurgent Group'; paramilitary militia consisting of villagers and ex-KNLA soldiers
Camp	Army base or outpost; from remote hill posts of 10 soldiers to Battalion HQ camps of several hundred soldiers
Bo	Literally 'Lieutenant', but also used to refer to all officers
NCO	Non-commissioned officers; Lance Corporals, Corporals, and Sergeants
Saya Gyi	'Big teacher'; title typically used by the villagers to refer to a Sergeant
IED	Improvised Explosive Device; a homemade landmine or boobytrap
KNU	Karen National Union; main Karen opposition group
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army; armed wing of the KNU
DKBA	Democratic Karen Buddhist Army; Karen group allied with the SPDC
Ko Per Baw	'Yellow headbands'; slang for the DKBA
Ko Per Thu	'Black headbands'; slang for the KNLA
Ko Per Lah	'Green headbands'; slang for the KNLA
Tha Ka Tha	'Insurgents'; used to refer to the KNU/KNLA
Nga Pway	'Ringworm'; derogatory SPDC slang for KNU/KNLA
Kawthoolei	Karen name for their homeland; also often used to refer to the KNU/KNLA
USDA	'Union Solidarity Development Association'; civil society organisation linked to the SPDC
NSA	Non-State Actor; any armed group which is not a wing of the government

Village Terms

IDP	Internally Displaced Person; villagers who have become internal refugees
Loh ah pay	Voluntary labour to make merit, but commonly used by SPDC for most forms of forced labour
Set tha	'Messenger'; forced labour as errand-runners, messengers, and for some odd jobs
Wontan	'Servant'; used by SPDC officers to denote forced labourers, usually porters
Lan pya	'Guide'; forced labour as a guide, usually to show the soldiers to the next village
Ta won kyay	'Obligation'; a quota charged on crops; usually at a rate of 8 baskets per acre
Paddy	Rice grain still in the husk
Rice	Rice grain after pounding or milling, with the husk removed and ready to cook

Measurements and Currency

Viss	Unit of weight measure; one <i>viss</i> is 1.6 kilograms or 3.6 pounds
Kyat tha	16 grams; 100 <i>kyat tha</i> equals 1 <i>viss</i>
Pyi	Volume of uncooked rice equal to 8 small condensed milk tins; about 2 kgs./ 4.4 lbs.
Bowl	Volume of uncooked rice same as a <i>pyi</i>
Tin	Also 'big tin'; volume of rice or paddy of 8 <i>pyi</i> ; about 17 kgs./ 37 lbs. of husked rice
Basket	Volume of rice or paddy equal to 2 big tins; 25 kgs. or 55 lbs. if rice, less if paddy
Taun	Burmese unit of measurement equalling 1.5 feet or ½ metre (one cubit; elbow to fingertip)
Twa	Burmese unit of measurement equalling 9 inches or 23 cm (one handspan)
Kyat	Burmese currency; US\$1 = 6 Kyat at official rate, approximately 1000 Kyat at current market rate
Baht	Thai currency; at the time of printing US\$1 = approximately 40 Baht

Honorifics

Saw	Sgaw Karen prefix for men
Naw	Sgaw Karen prefix for women
Pa	'Father'; Karen suffix attached to names to indicate someone's father, also used as a male personal prefix
Mo	'Mother'; Karen suffix attached to names to indicate someone's mother
Pati	'Uncle'; Karen term of respect for male elders of middle age
Mugha	'Aunt'; Karen term of respect for female elders of middle age
Pu	'Grandfather'; Karen personal prefix used for elderly men
Pi	'Grandmother'; Karen personal prefix used for elderly women
Thra	'Teacher'; Karen term used for any teacher, pastor, senior, or respected person
U	Burmese honorific prefix for older or respected men
Ko/ Maung	Burmese honorific prefix for younger or less respected men
Daw	Burmese honorific prefix for married women
Ma	Burmese honorific prefix for younger unmarried women

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Burma



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Scale: 1 to 800,000

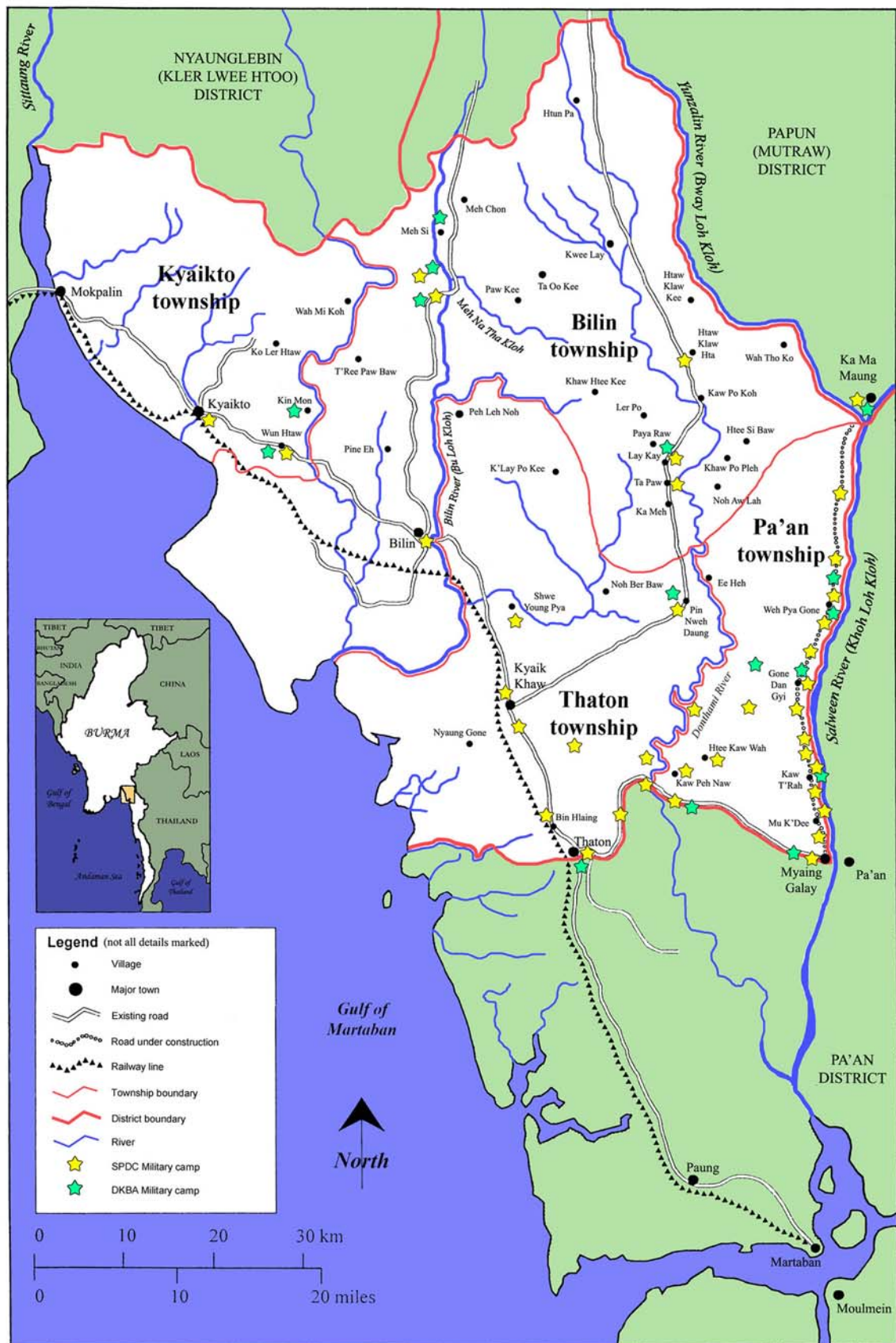
Karen Districts



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Scale: 1 cm to 22 km
1 in. to 35 miles

Thaton (Doo Tha Htoo) District



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I. Introduction and Executive Summary

Thaton District (known as Doo Tha Htoo in Karen) encompasses what is officially the northern portion of Mon State above Moulmein and parts of Karen State to the west of the Salween River [see **Map 2 of Karen State**]. Nyaunglebin (Kler Lweh Htoo) District lies to the north and Papun (Mutraw) District borders the district to the northeast. The Karen National Union (KNU) originally administered five townships in the district: Kyaikto, Thaton, Bilin, Pa'an and Paung townships. Owing to the escalating State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) influence in the region, Paung township is no longer administered by the KNU, but the other four still have a KNU presence. Much of the district is covered by the huge floodplain created by the Salween, Donthami, Yunzalin and Bilin River basins. The terrain is largely open and is dotted with flat rice fields, although some areas like Bilin township in the northeast are covered with hills and are still quite forested. Confusion often arises in that Pa'an township in the east of the district is not in Pa'an District, situated just across the Salween River, which also happens to be the seat of the Karen capital at Pa'an town. The parts of the district to the west of the Rangoon-Martaban road and railway and around the towns of Kyaikto, Bilin and Thaton are heavily controlled by the SPDC and therefore have less KNU

presence than the other townships to the east. The DKBA also has a significant presence in the area, especially in Pa'an township in the east of the district. The KNU and its armed wing, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), operated throughout the district and had *de facto* control over large parts of the district until the early 1990's. Skirmishes between the KNLA and the SPDC Army were common. During this period villagers were often shot on sight, villages were burned, and villagers were forcibly relocated. Following the creation of the DKBA in 1994, the fall of Manerplaw in 1995, and the subsequent and marked weakening of the KNU in the years that followed, the SPDC Army was able to gain control over much more of the district. However the KNLA remains active in the eastern parts of the district and are able to continue ambushing and harassing SPDC and DKBA columns.

Over the past decade the SPDC and DKBA have concentrated on consolidating their control over the district by increasing militarisation, forcing villagers to move to villages under their control, and making life so difficult for the civilian population that they would be unable to engage in or support any form of resistance. The SPDC targets the civilian population in order to undermine both civilian and armed

resistance. Occasional relocations of villages and burning of villages have continued to take place over the past decade, although with most villagers now living under the control of the SPDC, relocations have become scarce. The SPDC has concentrated more on placing restrictions on the villagers, demanding forced labour and arresting and torturing villagers who they suspect of helping the armed resistance. Movement restrictions and demands for fees and extortion money have so impoverished the villagers that they barely have enough to eat. The DKBA has assisted in this strategy by placing their



Villagers from P— village performing forced labour for the SPDC on the old colonial road between Kyaik Khaw and Lay Kay in Bilin township, Thaton District in January 2003. [Photo: KHRG]

own restrictions on the villagers, demanding forced labour, and requiring that the villagers pay a myriad of taxes. Most of the demands of all of these armed groups are channelled through appointed village heads. Some villages appoint separate people to deal with each group, so they may have a 'Burmese (SPDC) village head', a 'KNU village head', and other village elders. As village heads are the first to be punished for failing to comply with demands and often end up shouldering expenses themselves, many villages now have a system of 'one-month village heads' or even '15-day village heads' whereby the position is rotated constantly between different villagers to share the burden and the risks.

Since the KNU and the SPDC agreed an informal ceasefire in January 2004, there has been comparatively little fighting taking place between the SPDC and the KNU in Thaton District. During this time the SPDC has not actively sought out the KNLA, but rather have focused their energies more on oppressing the civilian population. While the shooting and killing of villagers has become far less common,

other human rights violations such as extortion and the use of forced labour have continued unabated. Under the cover of the ceasefire, the SPDC is trying to consolidate its control over the remoter parts of the district by constructing roads and establishing new army camps. Numerous road construction projects are presently in progress across the district, and both the SPDC and the DKBA are forcing the villagers to work on various money-making ventures, the benefits of which are never seen by the villagers.

The geographical location of the district makes it difficult for relief supplies or medical assistance to reach the villagers and the tight controls hanging over their heads make it difficult for them to improve their own situation. The vast extent of SPDC and DKBA control and the lack of any secure places to hide keep the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) relatively low, compared with other Karen districts. Villagers are left with little choice but to try to live as well as they can and devise their own ways of living under the SPDC and DKBA.

<u>Stamp:</u> Village Peace and Development Council Bilin Township Win Ta Pa Village	[To:] Date: <u>4.5.2004</u> Chairperson xxxx village
Subject: <u>Summoning the chairperson from xxxx village</u>	
Regarding the above subject, the chairperson from xxxx village must come to meet with the Win Ta Pa Camp Commander. [We] Have to discuss an urgent matter. If [you] fail, it is the elder's responsibility. By directive of the Win Ta Pa Camp Commander, come as soon as this letter is received.	
[Sd.]4.5.2004 <u>Stamp:</u> Chairperson Village Peace and Development Council Win Ta Pa Village Tract, Bilin Township	

Order #1: An order issued to a village in Bilin township by the VPDC of a neighbouring village on behalf of the local SPDC Army camp commander, demanding that they attend a meeting. At the meeting, the Win Ta Pa camp commander, Captain Kyaw Zin Oo ordered that each village in attendance collect 300 *kyin* [30, 000 cubic feet / 985 cubic metres] of stone for use in the construction of the Kyaik Khaw-Lay Kay car road. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #1 in Appendix F.]

II. Forces in the District

Militarily, the informal ceasefire between the SPDC and the KNLA which was agreed upon in January 2004 has been widely observed in Thaton District. Very few clashes between the SPDC and KNLA have occurred in the district with both sides generally avoiding each other. SPDC soldiers often do not travel through the forest and usually use the roads or bigger paths to get from place to place. Much of

their activity has consisted of simple patrolling without aggressively looking for the KNLA. This patrolling became progressively more active late in 2004, but clashes between the two sides have still been rare. The DKBA has been a little more aggressive in seeking out the KNLA during this time, but the KNLA has largely been able to avoid them.

The SPDC

The SPDC's grip on Thaton District is strong with several battalions constantly based in the area and many others that rotate through. Thaton District comes under the area of operations of the Southeast Regional Command headquartered in Moulmein, Mon State. This regional command maintains several battalions in the area including Infantry Battalion (IB) #24 and IB #96. In addition, Light Infantry Division (LID) #44 has its headquarters at Thaton and its 10 battalions often patrol the area. Other formations have also operated in the district for various periods of time [refer to '**Appendix C: SPDC Military Units in Thaton District, 2001-2005**', for a list of units documented as being active in Thaton District between 2001 and 2005]. LID #66 entered the area in early 2003 and stayed there until mid-2004 when it was replaced by *Sa Ka Ka* (Military Operations Command – abbreviated from *Sit Kaut Keh A'Kyay Seik*) #9. LID #66 is headquartered at Pyi (Prome) in Pegu Division and *Sa Ka Ka* #9 at Kyauktaw in Arakan State, but both had their local headquarters at the SPDC military camp adjacent to Lay Kay village in Bilin township for the duration of their stays in the district. The soldiers of LID #66 and *Sa Ka Ka* #9 were stationed in camps throughout the district and patrolled the surrounding countryside. In addition to the regular Army, the SPDC also has police posts in the areas of the district near the Salween River, along the roads and around the major towns, especially in the areas along and to the west of the main Rangoon-Martaban road and railway.

“From Wa Glu Koh to the plains they [the villagers] have had more experiences. There are many kinds of the enemy. There are Tha Ka Sa Pa [SPDC-controlled ‘Anti-Insurgent Group’], SPDC, Pyitthu Sit [SPDC ‘People’s Militia’], Per Kaw [Military Police] and DKBA staying together. When they hear about us [KNU/KNLA], they

gather with an SPDC column that is active and immediately chase us. That is why here [in the hills] and the plains are disconnected, but we hear their problems and they are doing things non-stop. They restrict the people more and more.” - “Saw Kaw Thu” (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa'an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

“I know the military police. They included military police. They wrote ‘Tat Htain’ [Military Police] on their shoulders.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

Prior to the ceasefire, SPDC military units rotated in and out of camps throughout the district on a four to six month schedule. From these camps the SPDC patrolled the surrounding area occasionally looking for the KNLA, but more often to harass the villagers. Outside offensive formations, such as LID #66 and *Sa Ka Ka* #9 mentioned above, were brought in periodically to sweep the area. Following the ceasefire, the SPDC has spent even less of its time seeking out the KNLA and concentrated more of its time demanding forced labour, money, and building materials from the villagers. The Army works closely with the Village and the Village Tract Peace and Development Councils (PDCs) in the district. Many of the Army's demands for building materials, money, and forced labour are sent through the Village or Village Tract PDCs and bear the stamp of the local level PDC. Order #1 shown on the previous page is an example of one such order. This order was issued to the village in question by the Win Ta Pa Village PDC under instruction from Win Ta Pa Army camp commander, Captain Kyaw Zin Oo.

“They [SPDC] don’t always come. Sometimes they come once a month and sometimes they come twice in one or two months.” - “Naw Kyi Doh” (F, 44), widowed villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #37, 7/02)

The Tha Ka Sa Pa

In addition to regular Army units, the SPDC also operates a group called the *Thaut Kya Thu Sit Kyay Yin A’Pwet*; more commonly known by its Burmese acronym as the *Tha Ka Sa Pa* (‘Anti-Insurgent Group’ in English). The *Tha Ka Sa Pa* operate in Thaton, Pa’an and Kyaikto townships, but not in Bilin township. The *Tha Ka Sa Pa* is rumoured to have originally been created in the 1960’s by former Kawthoolei Armed Forces (KAF) soldiers who had surrendered to the Burmese regime along with former KNU chairperson Saw Hunter Thamwe in April 1964. According to Martin Smith, author of ***“Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity”***, Hunter Thamwe defected with all of the KAF 5th Brigade – which at that time operated within Thaton District (the area now covered by KNLA 1st Brigade), #3 Battalion from Nyaunglebin District, along with a few others. KHRG researchers estimate there to be a total of approximately 400-500 *Tha Ka Sa Pa* soldiers presently operating in the three townships.

Most of the rank and file of the *Tha Ka Sa Pa* are villagers while the leaders appear to be ex-KNLA. In Thaton and Kyaikto townships villagers are forced to join only from villages which the *Tha Ka Sa Pa* trusts. The *Tha Ka Sa Pa* dictate how many people from each village must join and how long the enlistment period will be. One to four people are normally taken from the villages, although four to five villagers may be demanded from larger villages. The soldiers are not paid salaries. Instead, they are allowed to collect taxes from cattle and buffalo traders. The advantage to joining is that the villager no longer has to go as a porter or perform other forms of forced labour anymore. The villager is allowed to go and do his own work in the daytime, but must come back and stand guard as sentries in the evening.

The *Tha Ka Sa Pa* are given training, uniforms, and weapons by the SPDC. They carry AK47 and M16 assault rifles and knives. Although they have uniforms, the *Tha Ka Sa Pa* soldiers commonly wear civilian clothing, particularly short pants and sarongs. The *Tha Ka Sa Pa* soldiers spend much of their time guarding villages, but they also go out on patrols, during which they operate in small sections of four or five soldiers. The *Tha Ka Sa Pa* operate through a larger area and more independently than the *Pyitthu*

Sit who only really guard villages and serve the SPDC as guides [see ***‘The Pyitthu Sit’*** below]. *Tha Ka Sa Pa* soldiers who have lost their weapons to the KNLA have been arrested by the SPDC and jailed as a result. Although most of the *Tha Ka Sa Pa* are Karen villagers themselves, some of them are little better than the SPDC or DKBA in their relations with the villagers. Villagers have reported that *Tha Ka Sa Pa* soldiers demand food from them and threaten them. They sometimes tell the villagers that they are really KNLA and question the villagers about their relationships with the KNU. On separate occasions in the past, they have killed villagers for having had contact with the KNU. One KHRG researcher said in 2003, that ***“[t]he SPDC uses them to kill villagers who contact the KNU.”*** They are empowered and ordered by the SPDC to fine villagers and arrest them. Some of the operating methods of the *Tha Ka Sa Pa* are similar to those used by the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* (‘Guerrilla Retaliation Units’) in Nyaunglebin and Toungoo Districts further north and there has been some confusion as to whether they are the same group or not. This has led to speculation in the past that the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* may have expanded their area of operations into Thaton District. While similarities do exist, they are not the same. The *Tha Ka Sa Pa* is a paramilitary militia organisation recruited from among the villagers and ex-KNLA soldiers while the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* are under the SPDC Army and made up of specially trained SPDC soldiers, who all appear to have been selected from battalions from Southern Regional Command. The *Tha Ka Sa Pa* are also not nearly as brutal as the *Dam Byan Byaut Kya* have proven themselves to be.

“The Tha Ka Sa Pa is the guerrilla retaliation unit. They are still active and they patrol in Pa’an, Thaton and Kyaikto townships. Their activities are the same as the Baw Bee Doh [‘Short Pants’ – villager slang for the Dam Byan Byaut Kya] in 3rd Brigade [Nyaunglebin District] because the Baw Bee Doh are under the Tha Ka Sa Pa. When they are patrolling their change their insignia to that of the KNU and go to the villages, but they are the same as the SPDC soldiers. The SPDC soldiers select them and order them to do this in the villages. They are the same as the Baw Bee

Doh group. They are the same group, but when they are in the centre, in the towns, they say their name is Tha Ka Sa Pa, but when they come into the mountains they wear short pants so people call them 'Baw Bee Doh'. The clothes they wear are the same as the civilians wear. They wear short pants, sarongs and ordinary clothes. They also wear KNU clothes and have KNU insignia. They made the insignia themselves. Some of them wear KNU insignia and some of them wear clothes like civilians wear. If three of them wear KNU clothes and insignia on the clothes, two of them wear ordinary clothes and carry their guns. When they work they have good intelligence. When they enter villages they ask people where the village head is and the people show them the village head's house. When they go to the village head's house they ask the village head about the KNU soldiers and to send them to their KNU

friends. If people go to show them the KNU, they shoot at the KNU when they arrive at the KNU's place. They also shot and killed the villager who guided them. It was in the beginning of 2003. They investigate the civilians and if they know the villagers give rice to the KNU then they torture and hit the villagers. If they know people carry loads or carry guns or bullets, then they torture and kill the villagers also. They ask the villagers to show them the KNU's place and hit the people if they cannot show them. They speak Karen. They are Karen but they are not DKBA. Some KNU soldiers surrendered to them and they use those people. They speak Karen and they are Karen people. They are Karen people who went back to surrender and took their guns also, so they still have activities there until now." - "Saw Bah Heh" & "Saw Htoo Klay" (M, xx & M, xx), KHRG field researchers (Interview #2, 8/03)



In February 2002, SPDC Army soldiers entered these men's village to capture villagers to take as forced labour porters. Men are typically treated more brutally and are kept for longer periods of time than women are while portering for the SPDC, so many men, like those in this photo; flee from their village before the soldiers arrive to avoid being taken as porters. This however only leaves women and children behind in the village who must then go in place of the men. [Photo: KHRG]

The Pyitthu Sit

The SPDC has organised *Pyitthu Sit* or 'People's Militia' in many of the villages in Thaton District, especially in the more flat areas of Pa'an, Thaton and Kyaikto townships. The terms of service in the *Pyitthu Sit* vary with some villagers having to go on one month rotating schedules and others on a more permanent basis – some as long as four years. The number of villagers forced to join the *Pyitthu Sit* depends on the size of the village, with the larger villages being expected to commit more men to the militia. Villagers who do not want to join the *Pyitthu Sit* must pay a fee of as much as 10,000 Kyat a month to hire someone to go in their place. The villagers are given basic military training by the SPDC and given weapons and uniforms once the training is over. After the training they are expected to stay in the villages and act as sentries. Occasionally they are taken along by patrolling SPDC units to act as guides. This is especially so if there are no DKBA around. They are expected to open fire if the KNU or KNLA come to their village. If a villager loses his weapon, he must pay back its cost, as happened to one villager from Neh Paw Hta village several years ago. No salaries are given to the militia and the villagers are expected to feed the militia in their village. Each house must give 10 baskets [210 kgs. / 460 lbs.] of paddy to the militia each year.

"After the training they put their soldiers [militia] in the village and give them some good guns and some not so good guns. They give G3's, G2's [BA63 and BA72 respectively] to use and rifles from the time of the Japanese [possibly WWII vintage Lee-Enfield rifles]. They keep 10 to 15 militia in the village and they also have special camps in the villages. They set up their place like a small building in the centre of the village and they have to sleep there and stand sentry there. All of the villages there have fences around them. Every village there has a fence and they allow one way to come and one way to go out. They have to stand sentry and that militia unit must guard so the KNU cannot come into the village and also so they will not shoot in the village if they do come in. But the militia don't stand sentry, they force the villagers to sentry. They don't give guns to the villagers when the villagers have to sentry. They take the guns with them. They force the villagers to take machetes, knives, slingshots, sticks or some sharp thing. They are villagers, but they have a little status, so they want to oppress the villagers. Each militia soldier has to work for four years. During the four years when they are in the militia, they don't have to work a flat field so the villagers have to

do it for them. The SPDC doesn't support them with money or anything so the villagers have to serve them. Some militia have family and the villagers have to give them rice so each house has to give them two baskets of paddy. The villages there are big with about 100 or 200 houses so the militia groups can get enough rice. One militia soldier must work for four years in the militia, but some of them don't want to do that. The SPDC have camps in the villages and they also have soldiers, but the SPDC take the militia groups to patrol with them too." - "Saw Bah Heh" & "Saw Htoo Klay" (M, xx & M, xx), KHRG field researchers (Interview #2, 8/03)

"Fighting [between KNLA and Pyitthu Sit] did not occur in our village, but it has occurred in other villages. It occurred a long time ago. One of the Pyitthu Sit was killed when the outside KNU people came to shoot at Neh Paw Hta village. Their [Pyitthu Sit] weapon wasn't lost at Neh Paw Hta village, but they did lose one at La Meh T'Kaw. It was when the outside people came and got two guns from them, so they [SPDC] ordered them to pay the cost. Pa Lu Kyaw [Pyitthu Sit leader] ordered them to pay for the cost of two guns." - "Saw Po Win" (M, 37), villager from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #83, 1/03)

"The militia units shot at the KNU. The SPDC gave them guns and gave them their views. The SPDC set up their camps in the big villages and they also set up the militia groups in the village. They keep militia groups in every village and if they go to patrol the militia groups have to go patrol with them. So when the militia units see the KNU, the militia shoot at the KNU because when they attended the military training the SPDC gave them the opinion that the KNU is bad." - "Saw Bah Heh" & "Saw Htoo Klay" (M, xx & M, xx), KHRG field researchers (Interview #2, 8/03)

"At the time when we were doing the flat fields we had to do Pyitthu Sit for the people [SPDC]. Sometimes we had to go and porter for the people. There is no Pyitthu Sit in the village, but the villagers have to do it by rotation. Each person has to do it for a month. Anyone who has a turn must do it. We can't not do it because we have to do it by rotation. Each person has to do it for a month. The leader of the Pyitthu Sit who arranges it is Pa Lu Kyaw. Pa Lu Kyaw is the biggest leader. They give us guns because we do Pyitthu Sit. We have to stay in our village and be sentries. We have to go around our

village. When the people from outside [KNU/KNLA] come, we have to shoot at them. ... There are a few houses in the village so each person has to do it for a month. Each person has to do it two or three times a year. ... They don't pay us anything. Some villagers do not dare to do it, but they must do it. Some villagers have money so they hire people [to go in their stead]. To hire people with money, each person has to pay nearly 10,000 Kyat for one month. ... It is not enough for me each year because the villagers from our village who do not dare to be Pyitthu Sit have to hire people. They also call for a one-month village head. Each villager has to do it for a month. If they do not dare to do it they must hire someone. So we do like this and we eat like this. The villages of Meh K'Raw, La Meh T'Kaw, Noh Klee, Kyaw T'Ru, Wa T'Reh, Pway Lu Glu, Htee Kaw Wa, Noh Kra, and Naw Pa Doh have to do it. Ten people from each village have to do it for one month. After one month they change to another ten people. ... Ten people from each village have to do it so they give us ten guns. Mostly they call them AK [AK47 assault rifles, but are more likely to be Burmese-made copies such as the MA-1]." - "Saw Po Win" (M, 37), villager from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #83, 1/03)

Over the past couple of years the SPDC has begun giving large numbers of civilians basic military training. The SPDC says the reason for this is to prepare the country for a possible foreign invasion. The United States is often named as the likely invader. Displaying their paranoia over such a prospect, the SPDC recently relocated the seat of government and the ministries from the coastal port of Rangoon to Pyinmana in central Burma. Many commentators have quoted the junta's fears of the possibility of a sea-launched invasion of Burma by the United States as the reason. In areas of Thaton District which the SPDC has very strong control over, particularly near the towns, the SPDC has declared that all men under 45 years of age in villages near their camps must attend military training. The villagers are told that they have no choice but to go, although in some places villagers can pay 100,000 Kyat to avoid having to go to the training. This however is far beyond the means of most villagers. The trainings last for 25 days and are held at Myaing Galay, Ka Ma Maung, and Papun. No weapons or uniforms are issued after the training. The villagers are ordered to go back to their villages and stay at home, but to always send information to the SPDC. The idea is that the trained villagers can be recalled when they are needed. Presumably they would then be issued with uniforms and weapons. Many villagers are frightened of this because they are worried about being forced to join the SPDC Army. In the towns the SPDC has ordered

that all students above 7th Standard (Grade) and civil servants must also attend military training. This training is given to both males and females. Trainees were told to bring along a length of bamboo or wood to serve as a mock weapon during the training. The training reportedly lasts for three months and was done in every town in the district. Afterward, the trainees were allowed to go home. Some of the older students, however, were asked to join the Army [also see the 'Education and Health' section]. According to Andrew Selth, author of *"Burma's Armed Forces: Power without Glory"*², this tactic has been employed across Burma with all members of the SPDC-aligned Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA) having undergone basic military training, as have all members of the Auxiliary Fire Brigades, the Myanmar Red Cross Society, and civil servants.

"Five villagers are collected from each village and forced to attend the training and organise the militia. They give military training on how to shoot, how to detect and everything that soldiers should know. They give the training for four months. They give the training every year. They give the training three or four times a year. After they finish one training, they start another new training." - "Saw Bah Heh" & "Saw Htoo Klay" (M, xx & M, xx), KHRG field researchers (Interview #2, 8/03)

The DKBA

Thaton District is the area of operations of the DKBA #333 Brigade. The three battalions of the brigade operate throughout the four townships of the district, but the DKBA soldiers are most heavily concentrated in Pa'an township. The headquarters for the brigade is at Ohn Daw at the confluence of the Yunzalin and Salween Rivers just across the border into Papun District, across from DKBA headquarters at Myaing Gyi Ngu (Khaw Taw in Karen). KHRG researchers estimate that the strength of the DKBA in the district has remained at about 200-300 soldiers since 2000. DKBA units and SPDC units often operate together in Thaton District, but DKBA units also operate independently. SPDC units often use the DKBA as guides when they go on patrols. The DKBA also operates together with the *Tha Ka Sa Pa* and the *Tat Htain* ('Military Police').

"They [DKBA] said that they come to make peace. I went to their meeting when they came. They said in the meeting that they don't do anything else and that they are fighting for religion." - "Saw Bway Htoo" (M, 59), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #19, 1/02)

"The SPDC gives full power to them, so in order for them [the villagers] to stay they have to give what they want. They give them [DKBA] full opportunities, so they do as they want. The SPDC is using them to break down our nationality, the KNU organisation. They use them in many ways." - "Saw Kaw Thu" (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa'an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

"If I have to speak, their [DKBA] relations with us are good. Sometimes they are good, but some of them are no good." - "Saw Loh Mu" (M, 45), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #93, 5/04)

The SPDC does not provide a salary to the DKBA in the district. Instead they have told the DKBA to conduct various businesses to make money. The DKBA does not have a central treasury or revenue department. Each DKBA Brigade is responsible for raising its own funds. Geographic location and the business savvy of the respective commanders are the key contributing factors explaining how some Brigades, such as #999 Brigade in Pa'an District, appear much wealthier and better equipped than others. In Thaton District, the DKBA earns money through taxation on boats moving along the rivers and on people travelling along the roads in the district. Logging and the sale of thatch also provide income to the DKBA, as does a DKBA-owned transport

company. All of the thatch and much of the wood is demanded from villagers who are almost never paid for it. The DKBA also levies field taxes on some of the villages [see the ***'Fees, Looting, and Extortion'*** section]. Another source of income that has been widely alleged is the sale and transportation of amphetamine type stimulants (ATS). This contention has been supported by KHRG researchers. Many of the DKBA soldiers are also reportedly users of the drug. The tablets are allegedly sold for 500 Kyat each in the district. The SPDC has not taken any action against DKBA soldiers selling the drug within the district, nor has any action been taken against DKBA soldiers transporting it to areas along the Burma-Thai border where it is smuggled across to Thailand. There seems to be an arrangement whereby DKBA cars are let through SPDC checkpoints unchecked. According to one KHRG researcher, these amphetamines come from the Wa, presumably members of the United Wa State Army (UWSA), in the north of Shan State.

"They have to find money for their income. The Burmese SPDC ordered them to find money and do business. Because of that the DKBA has to find money for their soldiers staying at the frontline. The SPDC forces them to trade logs and drugs. They are allowed to do these jobs freely by the SPDC. The SPDC soldiers at the checkpoints don't check and make problems for them when they take these. They have to go and collect the drugs from Wa State [the Wa area of Shan State] and bring it through Burma and up to Myawaddy and then export it to their regular customers. The #333 [Brigade] leaders take it there. ... The SPDC soldiers want to trade in that but their leaders don't allow them to do that. They are forbidden to do that, but the DKBA can do that. The DKBA can do it to eat and the Burmese don't prohibit them because they are Karen people. To get rid of these people the SPDC has tricked them and forced the DKBA to abuse the rights of the civilians. The Burmese SPDC government says that they don't practice drugs but they order the DKBA to do it." - "Saw Bah Heh" & "Saw Htoo Klay" (M, xx & M, xx), KHRG field researchers (Interview #2, 8/03)

"Now they are doing a lot of drugs. It will be because the SPDC orders them to do it. I don't think the SPDC would allow them to do it if they hadn't ordered them to do it. I have never seen that the SPDC arrests them or restricts them. They must allow them to buy or sell it. They wouldn't do it if they weren't allowed to do it."

"Saw Kaw Thu" (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa'an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

Most civilians in the district dislike the DKBA and many describe them as being the same as the SPDC. Indeed many of the methods that they employ are the same as those used by the SPDC. Many villagers have told KHRG researchers that they now fear the DKBA more than the SPDC. The DKBA #333 Brigade officer known as Moe Kyo ('Lightning' in Burmese) and the soldiers under him have become notorious in both Thaton District and Pa'an District to the east for their brutality to villagers. The DKBA often demand forced labour and wood and thatch from the villagers. DKBA soldiers have been known to beat villagers who do not comply with their demands. DKBA officers also threaten villagers that they will be killed or their villages burned down if they are attacked by the KNLA. DKBA officers have reportedly begun threatening villagers with death should the news of DKBA human rights violations get out. The DKBA have also placed yearly movement restrictions on villagers making it difficult for them to go to harvest their fields. Since 2003 some DKBA have taken to dressing up as KNLA commandoes when they go to villages and ordering the village head to provide them with a guide. The villagers trust them when they see the KNLA uniforms and provide them with a guide. Once the DKBA leave the village, the guide is tied up, tortured and interrogated about where the KNU/KNLA is hiding. In October 2004, the DKBA managed to arrest a KNU Agriculture Department head and several of his workers. The villagers in the area were ordered to pay 400,000 Kyat in ransom for each person. Some of the workers who were not ransomed were killed and the rest were put in prison.

"Another thing is they said that their religion is Buddhism, but when they go to the monastery they don't take off their slippers. They don't worship. They said they don't eat meat, but they eat more meat than we do." - "Saw Meh Tee" (M, 22), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #21, 1/02)

"Look at when Htoo Baw [a DKBA officer] came. He said, 'Don't come to shoot at me crazily. If the people [KNLA] come to shoot me with one bullet, I will burn the village.' He will kill us and we have to be afraid of him more than the Burmese. One day he told us like that. On a second day he told us like that. I didn't dare to move. For us, we have to forbid it [KNLA attacks], 'Don't do it. Don't do it. The people will kill us.' As for them [DKBA], they take cover behind us. They are the Koh Per Baw ['Yellow Headbands' – villager slang for the DKBA]. They are very rude. They are ruder than the Burmese. They demand

to eat a lot of rice. Now they have demanded one basket and we have to find one basket at once. They said, 'You are the village head. If you go to complain and if I hear about it in a [radio] intercept, I will kill you.' So we don't dare to complain. We have to do it later, slowly. They would eat us if they heard about it in an intercept. That happened in November [2001]." - "Naw Lah Eh Mu" (F, 53), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #32, 3/02)

"All of the villagers are suffering. When they [DKBA] come they accuse us that we are Kawthoolei. They [DKBA and KNU] eat rice from the same pot. They are chasing each other and doing [fighting] each other. At the end of the day we are worse off. We can't do anything. We speak, but I don't think it's useful. We are villagers and workers. When they come, we welcome them as we can. What can we do if we don't welcome them? We welcome them, but they still don't look well on us. We thought that they lived the same in the past. Now, when they go back there they have to continue working and they are not finished with their duty yet. But they do things worse. They are killing each other. We are villagers so we can't flee and stay [anywhere]. They come up and oppress us. ... They ate some of the poultry. They say they are vegetarian, but they eat [meat] a lot." - "Saw Lu Doh Say" (M, 57), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #22, 1/02)

"They made problems by scolding and threatening us. The villagers don't dare to talk about it. They [DKBA] said, 'If you tell, we will kill you.'" - "Daw Khu Pu" (F, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #56, 11/03)

"No, the Burmese soldiers don't torture us. Only the monk soldiers [DKBA] torture us. When the monk soldiers came to the village they arrested and beat the villagers. It was Maung Tin Soe and Eh Dah. They beat Pa Thay Tha and Maung Tin Nyo. They are villagers. They [DKBA] asked them the way and they didn't know, so they beat them." - "Saw Aye Dee" (M, 40), village head from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #100, 11/03)

"I wish the monk soldiers [DKBA] would disappear. As long as the monk soldiers are still alive, we will be poor. We have to really be afraid of them when the monk soldiers come. In the past we were afraid of the Burmese because they were not our nationality. Now we are afraid of them a little bit, but we are very afraid of the monk soldiers." - "Saw Wee Lee" (M, 42), villager from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #101, 11/03)

The KNU and KNLA

Thaton District falls within the area of operations of the KNLA 1st Brigade. Although the KNLA no longer controls any real territory in the district it is still quite active. This is especially so in Bilin township, but the KNLA also operates in Pa'an, Thaton and Kyaikto townships. The KNLA operates in small guerrilla units utilising hit-and-run tactics, before the ceasefire occasionally ambushing SPDC and DKBA units. Since the ceasefire however, the KNLA has attempted to avoid any direct contact with the SPDC and DKBA and has been largely successful in doing so. The KNU also provides limited support to the villages in the form of monetary assistance and warnings about SPDC or DKBA troops who may be coming to the village. The KNU also provides medical assistance to villagers and some limited assistance to the schools [see the section on **'Education and Health'** for more on this].

"They protect the villagers by giving them messages when they get information that the SPDC military will come to the village and ask the villagers to be careful." - "Saw Bah Heh" & "Saw Htoo Klay" (M, xx & M, xx), KHRG field researchers (Interview #2, 8/03)

The KNU administers four townships in the district: Kyaikto, Bilin, Thaton and Pa'an townships [see **Map 3 of Thaton District**]. Paung township to the south was also formerly administered by the KNU, but owing to the vast extent of SPDC control in the area, the KNU/KNLA are no longer able to go there and thus no longer maintain the area as a township. The KNU collects yearly taxes from the villages in the four townships and also asks for food from the villagers. The villagers often do not want to pay because they are already paying the SPDC and DKBA, but they try to give something. There is usually less coercion involved than is used by other groups. Most villagers support the KNU, but they are caught between them on one side and the SPDC and DKBA on the other and after years of giving to all sides there is very little left. The villagers must also fear that the SPDC or DKBA may find out about their support for the KNU/KNLA. Village heads and sometimes individual villagers have been arrested, tortured, and sometimes executed for providing assistance to the KNU. The KNLA also recruits villagers to join its ranks. This is usually voluntary, but many villagers have become afraid to join the KNU, lest the DKBA find out and make problems for their families.

"They [KNLA] come, but they are a little better. They ask [for food] when they come. When they ask, we give it to them. They come to collect

taxes. For example, 'Who is doing logging?' The people who are doing logging pay a tax. 'Who has a boat?' After the people pay them the taxes, they give them one or two bottles of alcohol and then they leave. We don't have to give a basket of rice to them. Only three or four soldiers come." - "Pa Chit Mu" (M, 76), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #80, 2/02)

"Sometimes when they [KNU] come and they don't have enough men they ask for one, two, four or five people. They ask the same as the Burmese." - "Naw Tah Lay" (F, 26), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #25, 2/02)

"We have to work for them [KNU] because we are staying among them. Sometimes they come and talk with us nicely. We are sad if they don't talk with us nicely. There is not only one person who goes with them. Our children have also gone. Our relatives have also gone." - "Naw Thu Paw" (F, 43), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #26, 3/02)

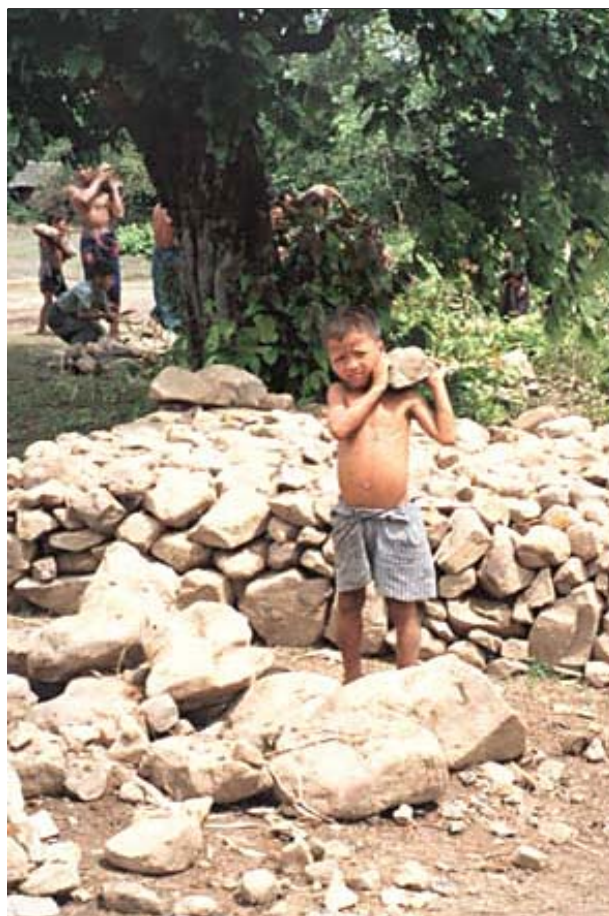
"Sometimes the KNU asks the villagers to carry loads for them. The loads of the KNU are less heavy than for the other groups. They are about 6 or 7 viss [10-11.5 kgs. / 22-25 lbs.]. They carry their food. The KNU gives them the same food as the KNU soldiers eat." - "Saw Bah Heh" & "Saw Htoo Klay" (M, xx & M, xx), KHRG field researchers (Interview #2, 8/03)

III. Forced Labour

“We can’t work freely. We work for ourselves for two or three days, but we also have to work for the Burmese [soldiers] for one or two days.” - “Saw Dee Kay” (M, 50), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #53, 3/03)

Forced labour is arguably the most widespread human rights violation being committed in Burma today and it continues to be practiced with alarming frequency by both the SPDC and the DKBA in Thaton District. The cascade effects of forced labour are all-pervasive. Precious few aspects of the villagers’ lives are left untouched by the regular demands. Any time that the villagers spend performing forced labour equates to less time tending to their fields and plantations. In performing forced labour, villagers are unable to spend enough time in their fields protecting the crop from wild animals and birds as it ripens or to actually harvest it when the time comes. The harvest suffers as a result and the villagers consequently are unable to get enough food to feed their families [see the **‘Food Security’** section]. Any surplus that would otherwise have been made is lost, and the money that would have been raised from its sale vanishes along with it. The lack of food in turn leads to problems with the health and wellbeing of the villagers [see the **‘Education and Health’** section]. Education also suffers as classes are regularly disrupted, with many villagers telling KHRG that they are only able to study for one week out of every three or four due to the demands of forced labour. The regular and varied demands for the payment of ‘fees’ find their origins in forced labour as well. Many of these fees are extracted from the villagers under the pretence that the money will then be given to those performing the labour. However, none of this money ever is, a fact that the villagers know all too well. It instead ends up in the pockets of the commanding officers [see the **‘Fees, Looting, and Extortion’** section]. Forced labour is also the cause of a lot of internal displacement. Villagers regularly flee their villages in advance of an approaching military column for fear that they will be taken for forced labour, only returning to the village when the soldiers have left and they feel the threat has moved on. Most of the internal displacement that occurs in Thaton District comes about because of this [also see the **‘Flight and Displacement’** section]. Furthermore, performing forced labour portering loads or maintaining one of the roads greatly increases the risk of stepping on a landmine [see the **‘Landmines’** section]. Forced labour is not solely the scourge of able-bodied men, but of all villagers; men, women, children, and the elderly are all expected to work.

Villagers have commented however, that the amount of labour being demanded by the SPDC has been reduced over the past couple of years. Portering in particular, is much less rigorous than it used to be and villagers are being taken for much shorter periods [see **‘Portering’**]. Much of the portering is now done by convicts brought in specifically for that purpose



This young boy from Bilin township - who looks to be no older than ten - is doing forced labour for the SPDC, collecting stones that are to be used in the restoration of the old colonial road from Kyaik Khaw to Lay Kay and on into Papun District. Each village in the area was ordered to assemble 30,000 cubic feet of stone. Many parents send their children to do the work while the adults are busy tending to crops or doing other work to ensure the family’s survival. [Photo: KHRG]

[see **'Convict Labour'** at the end of this section]. This is not to say that it has stopped; a fact which the testimonies of the villagers shown below attest to. In contrast, some villagers have said that the DKBA has actually increased the amount of forced labour that it is demanding.

"When they came in the past we had to do a lot [of forced labour], but when they came this time we haven't had to do it yet. Now they don't do it. They enter peacefully. They don't demand the villagers." - "Naw Bo Mu" (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #59, 6/03)

"Can you tell them to not force us to work anymore? Many of the villagers are fleeing. Tell them to stop. Ask them to pay us if they are going to force us to work. We could find people for them, but still they force us to work for free. Why must they do this? Our villagers will continue to suffer if they continue to do this. As the village head I must lead. Our children [the villagers] can't stay here without being forced to work for them. We have to tell them [to go and perform forced labour]. Maybe if they paid a little money to the people who are tired. If they don't pay a salary, then all the villagers must go to work. Surely you must know this." - "Pa Chit Mu" (M, 76), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #80, 2/02)

"Since Min Aung Hlaing [commanding officer of LID #44] has come up they haven't had to go. During the last two or three years they forced us to do a lot of labour. We had to porter, emergency porter and carry rations for them. In 2003 it is better. We still have two emergency people for 'lan pya' [guides]. Their deputy battalion commander doesn't come to collect them, but Myint Oo comes to call them. He said he can't find the way. They are from the same unit, [LIB] #108, Division #66." - "Daw Paw Ghay" (F, 50), village head from xxxx village (Interview #75, 7/03)

"We don't have to porter. It is only portering [that has reduced]. They still demand 'loh ah pay' [non-portering forced labour], bamboo, and thatch every year. The Ko Per Baw ['Yellow headbands'; slang for the DKBA] demand it and the Burmese [soldiers] also demand it. It is from Ta Paw Army camp. They also call us to do 'loh ah pay' [forced labour] on the road. They don't only call the villagers from xxxx village. They called all the villages from the village tract. They called every village when we went to a meeting." - "U Lah Paw" (M, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #91, 5/04)

"They [DKBA] do more forced labour. They used to go and carry their rations themselves. Now they order us to go and carry the rations for them." - "Naw Than Sha" (F, 53), village head from xxxx village (Interview #71, 1/04)



Villagers, young and old, doing forced labour for the SPDC on the Kyaik Khaw – Ka Dtaing Dtee car road in April 2004. These villagers from Bilin township, along with many others like them were ordered to gather 300 piles of stone, or *kyin*, for the road; each one measuring 100 cubic feet. The villagers were still collecting stone two months later when this photo was taken. The time that the villagers spend performing forced labour for the SPDC is time lost that would otherwise be spent trying to provide for their families. [Photo: KHRG]

Village heads constantly receive orders to send villagers for one form of forced labour or another. SPDC and DKBA officers demand villagers to come to their camps to dig trenches, cut firewood, fetch water, build huts for the soldiers, and perform other menial tasks. Work at the Army camps is usually done on a rotating schedule. Villagers are also required to repair the roads which run through the

district and to stand as sentries along those roads when the SPDC sends rations to its camps. The brush and scrub flanking the roads must also be regularly cleared to make it more difficult for the KNLA to mount ambushes against SPDC Army units and vehicles. The village head is also sometimes ordered to send people to work on money-making projects such as rubber plantations or logging for the SPDC as well as the DKBA. Porters are demanded by the Army to carry its rations up to its camps. Military columns out on patrol also demand porters to carry things to the next village. At any one time, a village head may have villagers doing several forms of forced labour for a number of different units operating in the area. Many villagers have told KHRG researchers that the labour is almost constant [see the sections below for greater detail on each of the various different forms of forced labour].

“When they come, we have to do ‘loh ah pay’ and they forced us to go and cut bamboo for them. We go. They also demand people for ‘emergencies’ as ‘lan pya’ [guides]. The people have to go and carry loads for them. They release them when they arrive at another village. They don’t pay.” - Pa Kee Thaw” (M, 60), village elder from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #86, 1/03)

“The Burmese soldiers forced us to porter. They demanded us from the village heads. They always forced us. Sometimes they forced us once a month and sometimes for two or three days at a time. When they had a lot of work they forced us more. Sometimes they demanded a lot of us and sometimes a few. Sometimes they demanded 40 or 50 people. Sometimes they demanded 100 people.” - “Saw Lah Say” (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

“Xxxx village has to work a little more than others. It is more painful. If they have emergency situations, my village had to work before the other villages arrive. When they have to send things or if people come back from the front who have been injured, I have to call the people from my village first. We can’t ask the people from yyyy or zzzz villages to come first. They are not free to come. The Burmese [soldiers] don’t wait for us. We have to call emergency people from xxxx village. We have to call two, three, four, or five people. If they need five people, we have to find five people. Sometimes when we can’t find people, we have to call the people while they are ploughing. It is more painful.” - “Saw Hsa Shwe” (M, 46), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #72, 5/04)

“They demanded them [porters] from the village head. When they come they call them themselves. When they order the village head, the village head must arrange it for them. When the village head doesn’t arrange it, they [SPDC] come themselves. When they come themselves they call all the men they see. They call and force them to go to work. They force them to work once a month. They demand three people each time.” - “Naw Maw Thee” (F, 20), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #55, 4/03)

“The Burmese soldiers do not force us. The Ko Per Baw [‘Yellow headbands’; slang for the DKBA] forces us to do labour. They demand that we send thatch. 1,000 shingles of thatch. They will take action if we don’t send them.” - “U Mo Day” (M, 40), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #61, 6/03)

Only the very young and the very old do not have to go for forced labour. Both men and women are required to report for forced labour. Men have typically gone for most of the forced labour, particularly the more physically demanding forms such as portering for the Army or building bridges. However, the demands are becoming so steep and frequent that other members of the family must also be called upon to do their part. Any given village may face numerous different demands from a number of different nearby Army camps, from both the SPDC and the DKBA. In the case where multiple demands for different units are issued all at once and the men are away meeting one of those demands, the responsibility then falls upon the women to tend to some of the other demands. Similarly, when the men are busy tending to fields and plantations, it are the women who must respond to the demands for forced labour. Traditionally, women have often gone for the less demanding labour at the Army camps such as fetching water or cooking rice. However they are now having to report to help clear the brush from the sides of the roads, as *set tha* (messengers), and even to porter heavy loads for the military [for recent photographic evidence of this, see *‘Women and Forced Labour’* in *“KHRG Photo Set 2005-A”* (KHRG #2005-P1, May 27 2005)]. Men have regularly fled from their village when forced labour orders have been issued, fearing that they will not be allowed to return home upon the completion of the work, but instead be taken as operations porters for frontline units. Furthermore, they may be accused of being rebels at any time, often with little or no supporting evidence and no recourse to defend themselves against such accusations. They therefore try to avoid any direct contact with the SPDC for fear of being arrested and tortured. This also results in women and children doing much of the forced labour.

“Yes, there is forced labour. The people said before that there was to be no more forced labour anymore, but now they come and force us to do a lot. They demand a lot of small trees, small bamboo and thatch. We do it a lot for them. The people said that there was to be no more ‘set tha’ [messenger] labour, but they are still demanding ‘set tha’ a lot. In the past they demanded only men, but now they also demand women. We have to go every day. They fine us if we don’t go every day. Sometimes they don’t fine us if the village head goes and speaks to them. Sometimes they fine us. They demand one or two small chickens and we must give it to them. One small chicken costs 250 Kyat.” - “Daw Khu Pu” (F, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #56, 11/03)

“Before we came [to the refugee camp] the people went every day. The people had to carry thatch, bamboo and do ‘loh ah pay’ and ‘set tha’. The men had to go and the females also had to go. Females and males went together. They said that if only females went they couldn’t carry the heavy things. The males were forced to go and the females were forced to go. They forced the females to fetch water and cook rice for them.” - “Naw Maw Thee” (F, 20), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #55, 4/03)

“Yes, they also took females. They called them for daily work. They had to carry rice. When they arrived at another village, they released them and arrested the males. They didn’t release the males. They released some of them after they had gone and come back.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

Children also have to go sometimes when their parents are already busy attending to some other task or demand. When the adults are performing some other form of forced labour or are occupied in the fields, the children are often all that remain to go for forced labour. While village heads try to arrange it so that children and the elderly do not have to go, some villagers have told KHRG that they have on occasion witnessed children as young as eight performing forced labour. Villagers are often ordered to complete a job within a specified timeframe, and in many cases this is only possible if the entire village goes to work. This includes very young children, a number of whom have not yet even reached puberty, as well as elderly villagers, some aged in their 50’s and 60’s. This is especially the case when the SPDC orders rations to be carried out to their satellite Army camps or for the brush alongside the roads to be cut. It seems that the SPDC does not care who is

sent to perform the labour, so long as it is done. If orders state a preference for adults or able-bodied men to do the work, it is merely out of a desire to get the heavy work done more quickly rather than any sense of morality.

“There were no 10 year old children because the people don’t let their 10 year old children go, but 14 and 15 year olds went. Some people’s parents weren’t free, so they asked their children to go. The people thought that we would let them carry light [loads], but they [SPDC] made them carry like men. They said the young people came and ate all their rice. They were very angry.” - “Naw Kee Per” (F, 44), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #40, 8/02)

“There were 15 year olds, 12 year olds, 9 year olds, and 8 year olds. Some could cut [the brush] and some couldn’t cut. They went to fulfil the quota because they had only these ages. When they couldn’t hire people, they had to go. ... They said children do not have to go, but we didn’t obey. There were children who were industrious. There were children who worked and learned from the older people. There were many types of children. The children like aaaa’s children are very industrious, they cut a lot. We cut it the whole day and they also followed and cut the whole day. They were worried that we would scold them.” - “Naw Ba Kee” (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

“He was 15 years old. They called him and I couldn’t call him back. He [an SPDC officer] said, ‘Mother, it is just for a while.’ I told him, ‘This boy is a student. He was sick, so he couldn’t go to school. He has been absent from school for many days already. Now he feels better and he is taking a rest.’ He said he wouldn’t make him carry heavy things, but they were making him carry a basket when I watched them leaving. They took some things out of the basket and let him carry a light load. I said, ‘He is a child. He never carries heavy things.’ He said, ‘I won’t make him carry anything.’ But when they left, the boy had to carry a basket with things inside it. When I went to complain to him, he said, ‘Mother, it is light.’” - “Daw Khu Pu” (F, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #56, 11/03)

“Some people over 40 years old went. Some of their children were married and lived separately, so they had to work. Some of them said, ‘My daughter is not free to go. She has a small baby, so I have to go for her one time. She can’t hire

anyone.” - “Naw Ba Kee” (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

“The children who are 7 or 8 years old also had to carry the earth [for use in the construction of a new road]. Old people also go. Even some over 60 years old go for it. I had to go. I must go. The ‘village mother and father’ [village elder] had to arrange for carts and bullocks. They are oppressing us so we must go.” - Pa Kee Thaw” (M, 60), village elder from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #86, 1/03)

“They didn’t arrest the young children. They didn’t arrest the children about 12 or 13 years old. They arrested all of them who were 14 or 15 years old. They forced them to carry loads of 15 or 20 viss [24-32 kgs. / 54-72 lbs.]. They always capture them. They always capture the children who are 14 or 15 years old. They even captured the old people over 50 or 60 years old in 2003. They always force them to carry one or two backpacks. They kicked the people who couldn’t walk and fell down.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

The conditions that the villagers work under vary depending on the type of work that they are ordered to do and who it is that is ordering them to do it. For almost all types, the villagers may be subjected to both verbal and physical abuse by the soldiers. Villagers working at Army camps or standing sentry are usually kept there until their shift is over and another villager comes to replace them. Porters now usually must only accompany the soldiers to the next village where they are released and a new villager is taken to replace them. Much of the longer-term portering is now being performed by convict labour. When villages are ordered to work on a road, whether it be to construct a new one or to see to the maintenance of an existing road, they are generally

expected to take responsibility for a certain section and are given a set time at the end of which the work should be completed. The soldiers do not usually accompany the villagers or oversee the work, yet it is understood that if the work is not finished by the deadline, the villagers risk having to do it again and/or being punished. Regardless of the work that they are doing, villagers are almost always expected to bring their own food and whatever tools they need to complete the work. They must also bring along whatever building materials are need for the job. If the work is to last several days, the villagers are sometimes not allowed to return home and must bring enough food and clothes to last the entire time they are there. Villagers who become sick while working are not always allowed to go home to rest. Injured villagers are never given compensation and only rarely given medicine. Villagers have to seek medical

a t t e n t i o n themselves and pay for it out of their own pockets. Only on very rare occasions are the villagers actually paid for the work that they do, and even then the paltry amount that they are given borders on being laughable [see the sections below for more on the conditions faced for each of the different types of forced labour].

“If [IB] #24 sees us and calls us, we must go. We can’t do

anything. We have to go unhappily. We don’t have time to make sure our wives and children we leave behind have enough food to eat. We can search to find food after they release us. We can’t search for food if they don’t release us. If our children get sick, our wives have to stay poorly without money for medicine. The villagers who have food to eat are better, but the villagers who don’t have food, like us, are depressed. The husband is depressed when he goes. The wife staying at home is also depressed. The villagers who have flat fields are better off. We don’t have flat fields, so we have to go and search for fish and frogs. If there is paying work [usually manual labour], we do it.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee

To: xxxx Chairperson

Date: 25.9.2004

Send the rice and the letter that reaches you now [accompanying this order] on to yyyy village quickly.

Send it correctly, not less than 8 bowls and 20 mess tins of rice.

One sack of rice was lost when [we] ordered you to deliver rice the other day.

Order #2: The unnamed officer who issued this order is demanding that the villagers from this village porter rice to their Army camp. Villagers from a different village had carried the rations this far, and this village head is supposed to arrange labour to carry it on to the next village, where they will continue the relay. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #2 in Appendix F.]

from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

The SPDC has been taking some precautions to cover up its use of forced labour over the past few years. Throughout this and other KHRG reports, one will constantly encounter the term *loh ah pay*. This is an ancient Pali word used to describe the voluntary labour performed at a Buddhist monastery or within the village community to attain religious merit. It has since been adopted by the SPDC to refer to forced labour in order to give the appearance that the labour being done by the villagers is actually on a voluntary basis and not under duress at all. This could not be further from the truth. When asked by KHRG researchers if the work was forced or voluntary, all villagers without exception have answered that for each and every time it was in fact forced. Another tactic now used by SPDC Army officers is to summon village heads to meetings and issue their demands for forced labour verbally rather than send signed and stamped written order documents. The documents that many SPDC Army officers are now issuing simply order that the village head comes to a meeting at the Army camp. When written orders are sent to village heads, SPDC Army officers sometimes ask for the orders back once the village heads have read them, thus eliminating the paper trail of evidence of not only the use of forced labour, but also their personal involvement in it. Village heads who have not been able to return the orders have been accused of giving the letters to the KNU or to human rights monitors and fined 5 viss [8 kgs. / 18 lbs.] of chicken or pork. SPDC officers are also either not stamping the orders, or stamping them and not writing in their unit's battalion number, so that the orders cannot be traced back to them. Another dodge is to order village heads or village tract heads to write the orders instead.

“‘Loh ah pay’ and portering are the same thing. They said to go for ‘loh ah pay’, but it was portering because it took three days and three nights.” - “Saw Pa Aye” (M, 28), villager from xxxx village (Interview #43, 10/02)

“The day before yesterday [March 3rd 2002], we were working and they came to call us. They said, ‘If you can’t come when called, we will arrest you.’ The villagers were afraid. We were polite and we came. When we came they said, ‘When Nga Pway [‘ringworm’; derogatory SPDC slang for the KNU] asks you to work, you work lightly [willingly]. When we ask you to work, you do it heavily [unhappily]. They were going to beat and force us.” - “Saw Kyi Nu” (M, 28), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #30, 3/02)

“They wrote a letter to us to go to a meeting at Ta Paw Army camp. The villagers from Ha T’Reh village tract had to go to Ta Paw Army camp. They ordered us to do it, so we had to obey it. There was no stamp on the letter. In the past when the Burmese [soldiers] wrote a letter to us, they typed it and stamped it. Now, they don’t have a stamp and also a Frontline [Battalion] Number. The units in the past typed it down, the units now don’t type it so we can’t remember it.” - “Saw Bee Lu Lay” (M, 52), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #95, 5/04)

“They [SPDC] came to order us themselves at yyyy village. The next day, the camp commander at Ta Paw Army camp wrote a letter to us to go to a meeting. When we went to the village tract meeting at Ta Paw Army camp, they ordered us to dig the stone [for use in the construction of the road]. We had to go and work. He specified the date. He ordered us to go on the 9th [of May 2004]. ... He didn’t introduce himself. He didn’t say, ‘I am the camp commander of Ta Paw Army camp.’ He asked, ‘have all the people arrived?’ When all the people had arrived, he gave the order. When we went to meetings at Ta Paw Army camp in the past, they said, ‘I am the commander at Ta Paw Army camp’ or ‘I am the commander who is taking responsibility in this area of operations. I am whoever.’ Now, they don’t introduce themselves.” - “Saw Bee Lu Lay” (M, 52), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #95, 5/04)

“He [SPDC Division Commander] ordered the [village tract] chairperson to write it. The chairperson wrote to us one time, two times, three times, but we didn’t go. So they ordered the people from Lay Kay village to come and send it. The chairman said, ‘They always order me, so the people always see me badly. They don’t write [the order documents]. They order me to do it.’ He didn’t want to write. ... I think they are worried that the people will know their names, but the people see it is [LID] #44. Maybe people complained about them. They don’t show themselves. They always order the chairman to do it.” - “Daw Lah Zin” (F, 48), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #28, 3/02)

In May 1999 the SPDC issued Order 1/99, declaring a ban on the use of various forms of forced labour following years of intense pressure from the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The Order was not widely circulated nor implemented as it was claimed to have been, and the use of forced labour continued. In 2000, the lack of any implementation of Order 1/99 led the ILO to invoke Article 33 of its

charter for the first time in the organisation's 84 year history, which required the ceasing of all technical cooperation with the SPDC and calling upon all of its member nations and trade unions to review their relations with the Burmese military junta. In an attempt to buy time the SPDC released the 'Supplementary Order to Order 1/99' in late October 2000, widening the terms of the ban and outlining the penalties to be imposed on those who continued to demand forced labour. A few days later, Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, then Secretary-1 of the SPDC, issued yet another order, the 'Additional Instruction to State and Divisional Peace and Development Councils, November 1st 2000'. These orders were alleged to have been distributed to every village head in the country, however upon being asked, many village heads claimed that they had never even heard of the documents. It was not until shortly before the ILO High Level Team travelled to Burma in 2001 to investigate the implementation of the ban that the documents were circulated [for English language versions of **Order 1/99, Supplementary Order to Order 1/99, and the Additional Instruction signed by Khin Nyunt, see 'Appendix B: SPDC Orders Banning Forced Labour' in the previously published KHRG report "Forced Labour Orders Since the Ban: a Compendium of SPDC Order Documents Demanding Forced Labour Since November 2000" (KHRG #2002-01 / February 8, 2002).**]. Villagers interviewed by KHRG researchers maintain that they became hopeful of improvement when the Order was first issued, however they found that the situation largely remained the same with the SPDC and the DKBA both still demanding labour. The drafting of these decrees has done little to cease the use of forced labour in Burma, as it continues to be widely practiced without those responsible being brought to trial. Under continued pressure from the ILO, the past year has seen several instances in central Burma where villagers have successfully brought civil cases against non-military officials for demanding forced labour. However, no military officer in Burma has yet been charged with demanding forced labour. Furthermore, in a clear step backward, following the success of a case brought by villager Daw Su Su Nway, the local judge was replaced with a hardline judge who then heard a spurious counter-case for using 'threatening language' brought against her by corrupt local officials. In October 2005, this judge sentenced Daw Su Su Nway to 20 months in prison, a clear warning from the SPDC to any other villagers in Burma who may be considering taking action under the orders banning forced labour.

"The letter they issued was burned in a fire. It was [Order] #1/99. I had the order book in my house. The [village] tract leader, aaaa, also has one in his house. The one that was in my house

was burned in a fire, but I still have some small pieces. It said that the villagers were not to be forced to do 'set tha' [messengers] or portering anymore. Even though the fire burned it in my house, aaaa still has one in his house. Every village has it. They distributed it." - "Pa Chit Mu" (M, 76), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #80, 2/02)

"When they issued it [Order 1/99] at the beginning, it looked like they would follow it, but now it has gone back to like in the past. The soldiers told their battalion, 'We can't carry the loads. If we don't call the villagers and they don't help you, you can't carry.' So they call them as in the past." - "Saw Eh K'Thaw" (M, 55), Karen district official (Interview #7, 11/03)

"Q: They said they won't force the villagers to work anymore. If they ask them to work, they will pay everyone.

A: They talked about that by mouth. When we went to a meeting at Lay Kay they talked about that. Now they are not forcing the villagers. Now they come with their servants and convicts. They just talked about that. Don't think about it. Ask the villages that are nearby. How many villages don't they force to work in 1st Brigade [Thaton District]? They force every village to work. They just talk. They distributed the order themselves, but they are still doing it. Their leaders from the town ordered it, but when they come here they do everything. Ask the villagers who are staying in 1st Brigade." - "Saw Cho Aung" (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

Villagers are unable to complain to higher authorities about the use of forced labour because they are afraid of reprisals at the hands of the soldiers who are ordering them to do the labour. Village heads feel that if they complain about an officer's use of forced labour to his Operations Commander or Division Commander, they would have to flee the village because the officer may come to torture or kill them.

"We can't report about this [to the Operations Commander or Division Commander]. Our tract leader said, 'Wait, I have not reported about this yet. One day, I will report about it.' If he reports about it now, there is no security for him and he must run away. He must run immediately when he reports it. He is afraid. ... Nobody has reported about it yet. We are coordinating with each other about their forcing us to work, restricting us and punishing us. Every village in Ha T'Reh tract will report at the same time about it. If we must run, we will run together." - "Pa Chit Mu" (M, 76), village

head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #80, 2/02)

"He [SPDC Army officer] said to go and complain to him. The people don't dare to go and complain to him because they are afraid of the columns [soldiers]. They would do something bad to us. We are the village heads. They come and can do [whatever they want to] us. If they come to the

house and kill us it is finished. He said to go and complain to him and if his people come to torture us, to go quickly and complain to him. He spoke like that. But the people don't dare to go and complain to him. The people are afraid that they will kill us secretly. His people aren't easy." - "Daw Lah Zin" (F, 48), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #28, 3/02)

Portering

"They don't carry their own food. We have to carry the food for them. We have to take the food from Lay Kay for them. We have to take the food from Lay Kay for them twice a month. Each time we have to find two bullock carts for them. The food is things like rice, sugar, and milk. The other things are books, letters, and food that their families send to them. They used to go and take it themselves, but now they don't go to take it, so we have to take it and carry it for them." - "Daw Mu Lu Wah" (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #65, 7/03)

The use of villagers as frontline porters has changed in Thaton District. No longer are villagers taken for weeks or months at a time, as they once were. Villagers have been telling KHRG researchers that since 2002 most of the portering that they are doing is from one village to the next where the porters are released and replaced with villagers from the new village. Throughout 2004 and 2005, SPDC Army columns have generally only been demanding one or two villagers to accompany their columns as guides. Upon arrival at the next village the guides are then changed for another villager who will in turn guide the column to the next village. The guides have also been forced to carry loads, but the use of convict porters has steadily increased over the past several years to the point where now, much of the heavy portering in Thaton District is being done by convicts [see ***'Convict Labour'*** below].

"This year [2003] the villagers can do their own work and they dare to go to their flat fields or hill fields, but in the years before the villagers didn't dare to go to the flat fields or hill fields to work. Now they don't have any trouble. Sometimes the SPDC disturbs them. They take the villagers to go with them and when they arrive to the next village they let the villagers come back. They don't take the villagers to go with them for more than two days, three days or one month." - "Daw Mu Lu Wah" (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #65, 7/03)

"Now they don't demand [people] by letter, they come themselves to get people. Recently they demanded two people from my village when they came. They took them after I gave them. They

went outside and when they met my children [villagers] coming back from the hill fields, they arrested and took them also. They released them when they arrived at another village. It was for one day." - "Daw Lah Zin" (F, 48), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #28, 3/02)

"They demand three villagers regularly. He is the column commander. When he sees me he says, 'Daw Ba Kee', find two or three emergency people.' I searched a lot. When I wasn't able to find anyone he said, 'Mother, I will take this person and then release him when I arrive at the next village.' I said, 'Yes, son.' I nodded. I asked, 'Son, how long will you take him? Where will you take him to?' He said that he would release him when they arrived at yyyy, or he would release him when they arrived at zzzz." - "Naw Ba Kee" (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

"Sometimes when they enter the village they demand 'lan pya' [guides] and 'loh ah pay' [forced labour]. They demanded only one 'loh ah pay' person from the village head. When they go outside the village they take everyone they see outside as they need. They release them when they arrive at the next village." - "Saw Cho Aung" (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

"When they demand people, we have to give them. They don't pay. The villagers are released after they send them to the next village. They are called to guide them. Sometimes they force them to carry a bag. Sometimes they don't force

them to carry loads.” - “Pa Hsa Ker” (M, 70), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #92, 5/04)

“When the Burmese [soldiers] come now they say that they do not demand porters, but they will demand ‘lan pya’ [guides]. They demand two people for ‘lan pya’ from each village.” - “Naw Wah” (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #38, 8/02)

“Now the enemy [SPDC] doesn’t call for porters, but when they go to each village, they demand one or two people to guide the way. They don’t force the people who guide the way to go at the front [as minesweepers]. They go at the front themselves. They make the people who guide the way carry loads, so it is not different from demanding porters.” - “Saw Kaw Thu” (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa’an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

The term which translates literally as ‘emergency porter’ is heard quite commonly in Thaton District. This term refers to the *ad hoc* portering demanded by soldiers upon arriving in any given village. In the past, the villagers were given no advance warning yet could be taken for several days or weeks at a time. The soldiers would arrive in the village and call all of the villagers down from their houses. Villagers who did not respond fast enough and come down immediately upon being called were kicked and beaten [also refer to the **‘Killings, Detention, and Torture’** section for more on this]. Unlike other forms of portering, the villagers were not able to pay to get out of having to go for emergency portering but had to go regardless. More recently however, the SPDC has only been demanding two or three villagers at a time for ‘emergencies’ and forcing them to carry their loads to the next village where they are released and other villagers are taken for the same purpose. The villagers are still not given any warning prior to the arrival of the soldiers in their village. The Army simply arrives in a village or comes to a field, takes a couple of villagers, and continues on their way to the next village. One villager told KHRG that the porters are

not released if they are unable to find anyone in the next village to replace them and instead must continue to carry their loads until a replacement is found. According to the villager, it can sometimes take two or three days to find a replacement. If porters escape or replacements cannot be found, their load is usually divided among the other porters or the soldiers themselves until more can be caught.

“Yes, they demand porters. When they arrive it is an emergency. They call it an ‘emergency’. For an ‘emergency’ they demand only one person, but they demand four or five people so we wouldn’t call that an emergency. Really they don’t say porter, they call it ‘emergency’. For ‘loh ah pay’ all the villagers from the whole village had to go and carry rice last week. They kept the

[To: xxxx] Village

Date: 30.1.2004

1) Send the rations listed below onward to yyyy.

- (a) 6 sacks of rice
- (b) 1½ sacks of beans
- (c) 1 sack of salt / fish paste
- (d) 1 sack of chillies
- (e) tea / milk / 1 paper sack
- (f) 2 cases of tinned milk,
- (g) 1 tin of [cooking] oil

(Included also (13) tins of milk)

2) There are also bags for the 2 villages of xxxx and zzzz, for each of these villages [we] are giving 2 milk tins, 2 viss [3.2 kg / 7 lb.] of beans and 2 viss of sugar. Take [the bag] for xxxx [village] and send the other on for zzzz [village].

[Sd.]

Captain aaaa

Order #3: This order demands that the villagers from this village porter the rations listed to nearby yyyy village. People from other villages have carried the rations this far, and this letter notifies the village headwoman that she must arrange people from her village to carry them the next stage. The checklist serves as a warning to ensure that nothing goes missing along the way. Each village head who provides porters is allowed to take a couple of things as specified which have been sent along for them. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #3 in Appendix F.]

rice at Meh Pu Hta and we had to carry it to Meh Pray Kee camp. We all had to go and carry for them. If we didn’t all go, the rice wouldn’t all be delivered. They specified 300 sacks of rice for the xxxx villagers to carry.” - “Naw Kee Per” (F, 44), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #40, 8/02)

"I was going with seven villagers and they arrested us on the path. They called us after we had gone fishing and we were coming back on the path. We had to go and sleep along the way. We had to go directly to Naw K'Toh, T'Maw Daw, Pa Pwaw and then go up to Lay Kay and Kyo Wai. Then we came down to La Tha Mee, P'Nweh Kla, Maw Lay and Nya Lu. They arrested us on the path so we couldn't bring food. They arrested us on the path. [In the past] when they called us from the village we could bring rice. They told us we would go for three days, but they took us for 20 days. We didn't get enough rice to eat." - "Saw Play Kee" (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

"When they arrived themselves, they demanded them [porters] from the village head because they have their own village head. They also have their village tract secretary. When they did not come, they ordered and then he [the village head] had to send them. They always forced us. Whenever they demanded it, the village head had to send us. They didn't specify it by the day or the month. They demanded whenever they came. When they ordered us to send people once a month, he [the village head] had to send them. When they ordered them to be sent twice a month, he had to send them. They demanded three people, or five people, or eight people each time." - "Saw Ni Maw" (M, 29), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #50, 3/03)

"Now if they come to the village they demand people as an urgent need ['emergency porters']. If we can't find people they take people wherever they meet them. They take two people each time as they urgently need them. They force people to go with them to guide them. They say, 'If the 'Nga Pway' ['Ringworm'; derogatory SPDC slang for the KNU] shoot us, we will kill you, so don't go to the 'Nga Pway'.' The people don't know where the 'Nga Pway' stay so the villagers have to go with them because they know the way." - U Maung Shwe" (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #67, 7/03)

"They demand the porters from the village head three times a month. They say it is for an 'emergency'. They call it an emergency, but they release them when they arrive at other villages. They are not released if they don't arrive at other villages. Sometimes it takes two days and sometimes three days if they don't enter any villages." - "Naw Sun Wah" (F, 50), refugee from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #87, 5/03)

"Q: Who had to carry the load after they allowed the people to go back?

A: They carried it themselves or they put more into the baskets of the porters who could carry. They divided a little of it for each person to carry." - "Saw Lah Say" (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

Whenever the SPDC needs to resupply one of its outlying Army camps with food, ammunition, or any other type of military materiel, they issue the order, typically to a number of villages within the area. The villagers are told that the supplies must be sent to a certain camp by a certain time. In previous years, whenever the portering took more than one day to complete, the porters were often bound at night to prevent them from attempting to escape. Now though, villagers are telling KHRG that this is no longer the case. On some occasions the soldiers will post an armed sentry to watch over the porters so that none of them will try to flee, but they are no longer regularly being tied up. Instead, villages are now being fined 20,000 to 30,000 Kyat for each porter that flees. In 2004 and 2005, villagers have often been ordered to carry rations for the SPDC without being accompanied by any soldiers. The villagers would not dare to lose or steal any of the rations for fear of punishment at the hands of the SPDC. Should any items be missing from the baskets upon arriving at their destination, the soldiers blame the villagers and accuse them of giving these to the KNU/KNLA.

"They guarded us when we slept. They guarded us with guns. They didn't tie us up, but they did tie us up in the past. Now they don't tie us. They haven't tied us up for the past one or two years." - "Saw Lah Say" (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

"They let them [porters] sleep freely. They [SPDC] had already told their village head, the Burmese village head, 'We have asked for porters from your village. They must go honestly. If they flee, we will fine them.' If one person fled they would demand 20,000 Kyat and we had to give them 20,000 Kyat. If they demanded 30,000 Kyat, we had to give them 30,000 Kyat. That is why the villagers didn't dare to flee and they didn't need to guard them." - "Saw Ni Maw" (M, 29), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #50, 3/03)

The baskets the villagers carry can contain anything from small arms ammunition, to mortar shells, to food. Often the soldiers add more things to the loads that they loot from the villages they pass through along the way. These items may include boots or slippers,

fruit, rice, or chickens. The average load that a villager is forced to carry typically falls within the range of 10 – 20 viss [16-33 kgs. / 36-72 lbs.]. Loads of 30 viss [49 kgs. / 108 lbs.] that are quoted by villagers mark the upper end of the scale. Loads as heavy as this are uncommon.

“We had to carry food and ammunition. It was over 20 viss [32 kgs. / 72 lbs.] in weight. We had to carry their food, ammunition, and other things. They forced us to carry. When it was light, they made it heavier with jackfruits and slippers.” - “Saw Thaw Oo” (M, 28), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #31, 3/02)

“The weight was 20, 25, or 30 viss [32, 40, 49 kgs. / 72, 90, 108 lbs.]. The weight was 30 viss. We couldn’t carry it but we had to carry it. ... I had to porter bullets. We also had to carry rice, milk tins, and sugar.” - “Saw Dee Kay” (M, 50), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #53, 3/03)

“I had to carry a 30 viss [49 kgs. / 108 lbs.] load. I had to carry mortar shells and machinegun bullets.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

Food is not usually provided for the porters by either the SPDC or the DKBA. The villagers are normally expected to bring their own food with them. When the villagers are forced to porter loads for any length of time, or for those who were arrested while in their fields or on the paths, what little rice that they were able to take with them soon runs out and they must either beg or go hungry. If this situation becomes extreme then food is provided to the porters, although this is typically done so grudgingly and even then only in sparse portions. Such portions are usually only half the amount that they would otherwise eat, if that. Furthermore, the food is usually only very low grade rice, a thin watery bean curry, and/or poor quality sesame or shrimp paste. Salt and chillies which normally are considered staples in Karen cooking are usually not provided. They are never fed any meat or fish. Meanwhile, the soldiers accompanying the porters dine on food looted from the villages that they have passed through, eating chicken or pork curries. Sometimes they steal the rice that the porters have brought with them, or swap it with their lower quality ration rice, taking the higher grade rice for themselves. It is usually only by begging that the villagers are able to get any more food when theirs runs out. Although, not all villagers have the courage to ask for more food from the soldiers as such requests are usually met with beatings or threats of being beaten for daring to ask for more. One villager from Bilin township told KHRG that when he

asked for another scoop of rice on top of the paltry amount that he had been given, he was told that they wouldn’t provide him with any rice but would be more than willing to give him a ‘bread fist’ (a Burmese term equivalent to ‘knuckle sandwich’).

“We carried their bags and baskets. It was raining at that time. Clothes and ammunition were in the baskets. We had to carry them to Thu K’Bee. We had to start carrying from the house near the village head’s house. When we go ourselves, we can go and come back in one day. When we went with them, we left at 4 p.m. We had to sleep on the path. The next morning they continued and didn’t feed us rice. They released us to come back after we entered Thu K’Bee. Then we found rice to eat.” - “Saw Pa Lah” (M, 24), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #44, 11/02)

“They had to go and sleep there. Sometimes when they didn’t go far, they released them when they arrived [at the next village or camp]. When they went far, they had to sleep two or three nights [on the way]. The SPDC fed them sometimes and sometimes they had to take food themselves. They had to take it themselves when they went for many days. They had to take it themselves. They had to take rice. The Burmese [SPDC] village head had to arrange it for them. The Burmese village head collected it from the villagers. Then they took it with them when they went.” - “Saw Ni Maw” (M, 29), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #50, 3/03)

“We didn’t bring our own food because we went to other villages. When the villagers from xxxx went to yyyy they know the villagers there, and when they go to zzzz they know the villagers there also. They eat food in their Uncle’s and Aunt’s houses. Don’t think that they [SPDC] are going to feed you. They never feed you.” - “Pa Chit Mu” (M, 76), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #80, 2/02)

“We carried for many days and when we couldn’t carry anymore, we fled. They didn’t feed us enough rice. I was worried about my house, wife and children and work left behind, so after I went for many days, I fled.” - “Saw Yo Tha” (M, 48), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #16, 8/01)

“When they called a meeting [to order the villagers to carry rice] they said that they wouldn’t feed us and that when we went to carry the rice we had to bring our own rice. We told them that the villagers don’t have rice. Some of them have rice but some of them don’t have rice, so it is a

problem. When we [the village heads] ask them [the villagers] to go they say, 'I can't go because I don't have rice to bring.' We told them [SPDC], 'You ask but if you don't feed them rice not every villager from every house can come.' Then they thought for a long time and said that if they could provide food they would provide food. When they provided the food the villagers went to carry for them. We had to fight them a lot to get food for them [the villagers]. They were very sorry to lose it. ... They fed us two times. They said the size was one milk tin [195 grams / 7 ozs.]. We told them, 'One milk tin is not enough for us.' That is why we asked for two milk tins [of rice]. It was because some people are big and some are small. They gave it to us, but they were very sorry to lose it. The other food that they gave us was a very salty shrimp paste and it was very white [of poor quality]. We had to ask for monosodium glutamate and chillies from them. They didn't come to give it. If the cooks [villagers] were clever, we got monosodium glutamate and chillies. If the cooks weren't clever the carriers didn't get those things to eat.' - "Naw Kee Per" (F, 44), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #40, 8/02)

"They didn't feed us enough. We also brought our own rice. They fed us our rice. They cooked our rice and shared it with us. The porters cooked it but they [SPDC] shared it with us. They fed us twice a day. They fed us beans. I didn't get enough to eat. One person got one spoonful. ... They ate better than we did. They ate pork and chicken curry. When we went to the villages, they threw the villagers' chickens in the baskets. The villagers didn't dare to complain." - "Saw Dee Kay" (M, 50), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #53, 3/03)

"They fed us regularly two times, but they fed us only one plate each time. They fed us one plate of rice, one bit of sesame paste and one chilli. We had our portion weighed out on a scale. We had only this if we didn't get enough to eat. They ate separately. The porters ate separately. They didn't feed the porters frogs or fish when they got them." - "Saw Play Kee" (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

"They fed us rice, but it wasn't enough. There was no chicken curry. They fed us a little bean soup. They said they didn't care whether we were fed or not. Sometimes when we asked for a little scoop of rice they said, 'You won't get rice, but you will get a bread fist.' [i.e. a 'knuckle sandwich'] We had to turn our heads. We went back to lie down. We had to drink water to be full

enough. ... They fed us one time in the morning and one time in the evening. Sometimes they fed us each a spoonful. They didn't have any other food. They only had red shrimp paste. They boiled it with a lot of water. They didn't give us any sweet tea. ... Their food wasn't the same [as the porters]. They ate good food. They ate chicken curry and a good shrimp paste." - "Saw Bo Ghay" (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

The treatment of villagers when they are portering depends largely on the unit the villagers are portering for. Some units are known for being particularly brutal, while others are comparatively moderate. Villagers who are unable to carry their loads are commonly yelled at and verbally abused by the soldiers and are sometimes hit or kicked in order to keep them moving. Some of the more violent units beat the porters with sticks and the butts of their rifles. One villager from Thaton township who was unable to carry his load due to illness was punched, kicked, and beaten with a rifle butt, breaking five of his ribs in the process. The beatings continued until he began coughing up blood. Luckily for him one of the soldiers, presumably one of the rank and file, took pity on him and aided in his escape, saying that if he did not flee the other soldiers would only continue to beat him. In the past, such beatings have from time to time not stopped until the porter had been killed. Another villager, "Saw Say Tee" [Interview #57], from Bilin township said that he was beaten so badly he was no longer able to carry the load that he had been given. Since that time, he has been unable to work any more as a result of the beating that he received. When called upon again to go and porter yet another load, he had to send his wife in his stead. When his wife was unavailable to go, they have had to hire itinerant labourers to go in their place. Many villagers who become too weak to continue carrying are kicked and beaten, as though it were an incentive to get them moving again, presumably in the same way that one whips a horse to make it run faster. The strain of the heavy loads coupled with the lack of food proves to be too much for some and they simply buckle under the weight of their loads, in which case they are doubly beaten by the soldiers and then simply left to die where they lay beside the path.

In general, the conditions have improved somewhat, with fewer beatings being given. One plausible explanation for this may lie in ways in which the forced labour, with portering in particular, is being demanded. Most of the portering now being done by villagers in Thaton District is, as was mentioned above, from one village to the next. The periods and distances over which they must carry their loads are not nearly as great as they once were and are generally not long

enough to sap their strength in the same way as if they had to carry for days on end. As a result, fewer villagers are being beaten for their inability to carry their loads. That aside, villagers complain that beatings are sometimes still given out and that the conditions of portering, while better, are still difficult and far from being acceptable. Meanwhile, convict porters are still treated as brutally as ever.

"When we couldn't walk they kicked us. When we couldn't climb the mountain they reviled and kicked us. We felt dizzy when we climbed the mountain. We fell down and they reviled us a lot." - "Saw Thaw Oo" (M, 28), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #31, 3/02)

"I have gone to carry loads. I went to carry five times during the last rainy season. I went three times in the dry season of this year [2003]. Before I came [to the refugee camp] I had to go one time and it took a month. After I went for a month I came up here. They tortured me. They beat, kicked, stomped, and soaked me in a buffalo puddle [a puddle of mud in which buffaloes wallow]. I couldn't endure it. They hurt me very often. They hurt me very often. I couldn't endure it." - "Saw Play Kee" (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

"They hurt me this year [2003]. I told him that I couldn't carry because I had a fever. He tied me, kicked me, and punched me. After he punched me, he kicked me with his big boots. Three of my ribs on the left side and two of my ribs on the right side were broken. After he tied me up, he punched me and kicked me. He punched my face and chest. He hit my thighs and back with the butt of his rifle. He hit my sides five or six times with the rifle butt. He didn't hit me again after I coughed blood. He ordered his soldiers to guard me all night. He didn't feed me any rice. He didn't feed me rice from the morning until the night. During the night one of his soldiers pitied me, so he untied me. After he untied me he told me to flee. Then he shot his gun and shouted, 'The porter is fleeing! The porter is fleeing!' The people shouted. I fled. He said, 'Flee and don't come back. If you come back the people will torture you again.' I didn't dare to go back to the village after I fled. I fled away. I didn't dare go back to the village. They came to ask about me in the village every day and only my wife was living there. They came and caught all of the chickens at my house. My wife fled to stay in someone else's house. She didn't dare to stay at home. They often came to ask about me. ... My friend told me that he [the SPDC officer] punched the soldier [who let him go] and one of

his teeth came out. He told his sentry, 'You are a careless sentry. The person fled. You didn't tie him well enough.' He punched and beat him." - "Saw Play Kee" (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

"I always went to porter for the Burmese [soldiers], but I couldn't carry for them anymore since they beat me. After they beat me I couldn't work anymore. I had to go for portering, but my wife had to go instead. I couldn't go to porter. We had to hire people when we couldn't go ourselves." - "Saw Say Tee" (M, 48), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #57, 5/03)

"I saw it. Sometimes they kicked the villagers. They were villagers from xxxx. I saw it. It happened last year, in 2002. It was in the dry season during the month of Ta Baung [March]. It was hot. When they couldn't carry the loads, they left them. They kicked and stomped and after that left them. It was very painful. They kicked one man with their big boots. They kicked him on the back. They also kicked his sides. The people had to go and carry him back. The people saw him on the path. He couldn't walk, so they had left him. Later the people who were travelling saw him and they carried him back. The name of the one who suffered is Uncle aaaa. He lives in xxxx village. He is about 50 years old." - "Saw Lah Say" (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

Porters have on many occasions been wounded when the unit that they were portering for has been ambushed by the KNLA. On such occasions the porters are rarely given any medical attention. Though there has been relatively little fighting recently, villagers have been wounded or killed by landmines and crossfire. In February 2003, a KNLA unit opened fire on a boat carrying a small SPDC unit and a number of porters. Eight of the soldiers were killed, as were six porters with two more being wounded. The porters that were wounded had to pay for their own medical treatment, and the families of those killed received no compensation whatsoever.

Moreover, the porters are generally punished for supposedly knowing that the 'rebels' were in the area and thus by not sharing this information with the soldiers, they were responsible for the attack. These allegations are levelled against the porters following almost every ambush [also see the section dealing with 'Killings, Detention, and Torture']. Even in instances where it should be obvious that the porters had no prior knowledge of the whereabouts of the resistance, such as in those occasions where a number of them are wounded or even killed in the

ambush, they are still punished. The most common form of punishment are beatings. The porters are kicked, punched, beaten with sticks, or with the butts of the soldiers' rifles. Some of the punishments doled out to the porters, however, are less physical and more psychological. As one villager told KHRG, the soldiers forced the porters to strip naked and run around without any clothes on, pull at one another's ears, and stand and squat repeatedly. 'Frog-squatting' and pulling on one's own earlobes, both of which make one look silly, are traditional forms of humiliation in Burma, and forcing adults to do this while running around naked makes it even more a form of psychological torture.

Furthermore, porters are also regularly used as human shields during ambushes. The soldiers stay close to or even hide behind the porters in the hope that the KNLA soldiers will not fire for fear of hitting one of the villagers. This sometimes seems to work with the KNLA being reluctant to open fire in case they accidentally wound or kill any of the porters. This does not prevent every ambush from taking place, and on many occasions porters have been wounded and killed while being held as human shields. One villager from Bilin township told KHRG that in late 2002 he was not only used as a human shield by the soldiers but also as a human minesweeper, being forced to walk in front of the soldiers at gunpoint. If there are any landmines planted on the path, the porters will detonate them while the soldiers walk at a safe distance behind them [also see the 'Landmines' section].

"Fighting occurred once at Naw K'Toh. It happened in this month of Ta Po Tweh [Burmese month roughly corresponding to February, 2003]. When the fighting happened they were on a boat. Eight of their soldiers died. Six porters were injured and two porters died. A person from yyyy escaped. The soldiers were carrying ammunition and drowned. The people [other SPDC soldiers] went to get them later. The porters floated and the soldiers didn't float. The people had to pull them out along with their ammunition. They got six guns after they pulled them out. Two guns were lost. They couldn't find them. The boat was broken and the engine was destroyed. ... They [the porters] had to treat themselves. They [SPDC] didn't pay for the medicine. They also didn't give compensation for the porters who died." - "Saw Play Kee" (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

"They demanded five porters. One porter from xxxx was injured and there were only four porters left to carry the loads. He was injured once in his buttocks and two times in the hand. He was

injured a little bit. He was injured a little bit on his hand and his leg. The people [KNLA] were waiting and ambushed them [detonated a landmine]. We didn't see anyone die. When it hurt him they ordered us to go and see [if he was alright]. We went to see and we didn't see anyone [SPDC] dead. Only one of them [SPDC] got injured. It hurt both of his legs. Two villagers were injured and two villagers died. The two villagers who died were from yyyy village. There were also porters from www, xxxx, yyyy and zzzz." - "Saw Pa Aye" (M, 28), villager from xxxx village (Interview #43, 10/02)

"Fighting has occurred when the people [KNLA] have ambushed them. Sometimes when they were ambushed they punished the porters. They tied them together and forced them to pull at their ears, and then forced them to run [around] without their clothes. They had to squat and stand up 100 times each. As a pair they had to stand face to face and pull on their ears." - "Naw Maw Thee" (F, 20), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #55, 4/03)

"The people [KNLA] shot at them a few times. They [SPDC] said that we asked them to shoot, so they beat us. They just shot four or five times and ran away. They [SPDC] protected themselves with the villagers [used the villagers as human shields]. They said the villagers had gone to tell [the KNLA], so they were shot at. They hid behind trees and bamboo. Then when they [KNLA] shot, they forced the porters to run out in front. We didn't have anything. We would die if we ran out in front. They stayed behind us in the forest. None of the porters were injured." - "Saw Mya Kaw" (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #13, 6/01)

"Recently when they [SPDC] went back they took the villagers to follow them [as porters]. They summoned many villagers and ordered them to go and get [travel] passes. The villagers were not all there so they ordered them to go and call the people back from the hill fields. When the villagers didn't go to call them, they became annoyed and reviled us a lot. They said we were not their relatives and that they would kill us by planting landmines on the paths to the hill fields. They said they wouldn't need us when we are dead. They kept us as their cover [human shields] and took many of us to follow them. ... They kept us as their shields. If the people [KNLA] shot at them, it would hurt us. One Burmese soldier walked behind each villager. As for me, I was at the front. If there had been any landmines I would have been hurt by them. They forced me to clear

their way [as a human minesweeper].” - “Saw Pa Lah” (M, 24), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #44, 11/02)

Villagers who become sick while portering are only provided very basic medical assistance, if any at all. The SPDC and the DKBA are both reluctant to give medical care to any of their porters. When assistance is given, it often amounts to no more than a single tablet of a painkiller such as paracetamol. Sometimes the villagers are released and must make their own way back to their village. Those who have become too weak to move under their own power are simply left behind on the trail to die, or left to the care of people in a village along the way.

“Sometimes they took care of them [the sick porters]. Sometimes they didn’t take care of them. They released them. They didn’t give them medicine; they released them to go back. Now they allow them to go back. They don’t do as they did in the past. It has decreased a little.” - “Saw Lah Say” (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

“Many of them got sick. They didn’t take care of them. I didn’t see that they took care of them. They gave them medicine, but they didn’t get better. They still had fevers. They couldn’t walk, but they were still calling them to follow. They called them until they couldn’t walk anymore and then they left them at other villages. They always did it like that. They gave them a piece [tablet] of paracetamol, but they weren’t cured. They didn’t allow them to come back, but when they couldn’t walk anymore, they left them at other villages. When they felt better their friends or relatives carried them back.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

“One of my friends went [to porter] and he was sick for over 10 days. They didn’t give him medicine. When he could no longer carry, he fled. Then they came to fine him. They fined him one duck.” - “Saw Ko Tha” (M, 24), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #35, 4/02)

To:
Chairperson
xxxx Village

15-10-2004

The vehicle road has to be repaired as it has been repaired every year between yyyy village and zzzz Chaung [River]. [This has to be] Completed this month from the 15th to the 21st. The villagers must come this month on the 21st to complete the repairs, you are notified.

[Sd.]

Major aaaa
Column Commander
yyyy Village

Order #4: This is an order demanding that the village head send villagers to repair a set length of the car road by a specified date. Villagers are forced to repair the car roads every year following the wet season when large sections are often washed away by the heavy rains. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #4 in Appendix F.]

Road Projects

While there is not an extensive road network in the parts of the district to the east of the main Rangoon-Martaban road (i.e. in Bilin, Pa'an, and Thaton townships), the SPDC is endeavouring to expand this network so that all areas are easily accessible to its troops. Numerous road building projects have now been under way for the past few years to this end. The SPDC claims that these roads are being built for the benefit of the villagers, often citing 'national development' as the cause. However, these roads have been used primarily to facilitate Army encroachment into areas where SPDC control is weak. The development of new roads is invariably followed by the establishment of new Army camps along those roads, ultimately resulting in the increased militarisation of the area. Army posts placed along the roads then restrict the movement of villagers to the extent that the roads become obstacles to free movement rather than the opposite. To the villagers, new roads mean more forced labour: building and later maintaining the roads, building the camps along the roads, portering supplies to those camps, and standing sentry on the roads.

northwards along the western bank of the Salween River to Ka Ma Maung [see **Map 3** of *Thaton District* for the locations of each of these roads]. While the Rangoon-Martaban road is sealed, the other four roads are all dirt roads which become impassable to vehicles in the wet season. Large sections of the roads wash away in the rainy season or become rutted and potholed, so every year villagers are forced to repair the roads once the rains cease. To do this, the villagers must carry earth and stones to fill any potholes and rebuild sections where the embankment has washed away. The villagers must also clear away any landslides that fall onto the road. Villagers are not paid for this work, nor are they supplied with food, tools, or building materials. The villagers are expected to take their own tools with them and cut any and all of the required building materials from the forest. The SPDC typically orders villagers to repair a specified section of the roads by a particular date. Some villagers have told KHRG that they were responsible for repairing ten miles [16 kms.] of the road. Such sections are usually located close to the village.

Five roads dominate the region. One road, originating in Martaban, heads north through Thaton and Kyaik Khaw to Bilin and proceeds all the way to Rangoon. This road forks at Bilin to create the second road which continues its northward journey through Bilin township into Papun District where it eventually arrives at Papun town. The third road branches off the Rangoon-Martaban road at Kyaik Khaw, north of Thaton, firstly heading northeast to Wee Raw and then north, roughly following the course of the Donthami River through Lay Kay village and on into Papun District to join the Ka Ma Maung-Papun road at Ka Dtaing Dee. A fourth road links Myaing Galay with Thaton town to the west, while the fifth road branches from this road at Wah Bo Taw, just west of Myaing Galay, heading



These villagers from Bilin township are collecting stones for use in the construction of the Kyaik Khaw - Ka Dtaing Dtee forced labour road. In April 2004 each village was ordered by Brigadier General Myint Aung, commanding officer of Sa Ka Ka #9 to gather 300 *kyin* [30,000 cubic feet] of stone like the ones in this photo. Each *kyin* took 10 bullock cart loads of stone to assemble. None of the villagers were ever paid for the labour that they contributed. [Photo: KHRG]

“They said that they would build a road. They told the villagers, ‘What we are doing now is not for us. We are making it for the villagers.’” - “Saw Thu Day” (M, 35), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #96, 5/04)

“They had to make the road, carry earth, and build a bridge on the Ta Paw car road. They started building it from lower P’Nweh Kla to upper P’Nweh Kla. As for us, we stayed here [at xxxx village], so we had to go and work at Ta Paw. They continued building it. The villagers from Lay Kay also had to build it. Each place had to build a section. The villagers from Kru Kyi and Pwa Ghaw also had to go and build at Ta Paw. ... They build the road and then they will travel and carry their food up [to their camp]. They said, ‘If the bridge breaks, you have to build it again. You built it this year and if it breaks next year, you have to build it again.’” - “Saw Eh K’Noh” (M, 57), refugee from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #85, 1/03)

“When the car road was destroyed because of rain, we had to go to spread stone and repair it. We had to start repairing the road at Htaw Pra and then to their camp. During the rainy season there was a flood and a landslide at their camp, so we had to go and repair it and put stone and sand.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

The SPDC plans to upgrade these roads from unsealed dry season roads to all season roads by first paving them with stones and later with tar. On April 20th 2004, Brigadier General Myint Aung, commanding officer of SPDC Military Operations Command (Sa Ka Ka) #9 temporarily based in the Lay Kay Army camp, ordered the upgrade of the old colonial road running from Kyaik Khaw to Lay Kay. In May 2004, each village near the path of this road was ordered to collect 300 *kyin* of stone which were

to be placed neatly beside the road. A *kyin* is a pile of stone measuring ten feet [3 metres] by ten feet to a depth of one foot [30 cms.], totalling 100 cubic feet [30.5 cubic metres] per pile. Each village was therefore ordered to collect 30,000 cubic feet [985 cubic metres] of stone. At least 20 separate villages were issued the same order, including Maw Lay, Ka T’Daw Ni, P’Nweh Klah, Noh Nya Thu, La Ko, Ka Meh, Ta Paw, Ler Klaw, Lay Kay, Ee Heh, Kru Si, Noh Aw Lah, Pwa Ghaw, Kyaw Kay Kee, Ta Thu Kee, Noh Law Plaw, Noh Ka Day, Htee Pa Doh Kee, Meh Theh Pwoh, and Ha T’Reh. Each of these villages had to assemble the 300 *kyin*, amassing a staggering 600,000 cubic feet [19,685 cubic metres] of stone.

Some villages were given only two and a half weeks in which to assemble all 300 piles of stone. This unrealistic order required that everyone living in the village - men, women, and children, some as young as four or five years old - had to assist in collecting the stones. Some villages found themselves still collecting the stones two months later. Only a year before, in 2003, many of these

same villages were also ordered to collect another 100 *kyin* of stones for use on the same road. These stones were positioned to form a solid base, over which a second layer, composed of laterite (reddish-coloured clay commonly used in road building that dries rock hard when exposed to air and sun) would be laid. After all of this is completed tar would be poured to seal the road.

“Now they have to go and collect stones to spread on the road on the other side of the Baw Naw River. They demand 300 piles of stone from our village. It is LIB #376. They came themselves to force us to do it. They came this morning [7/5/04]. We have to make 300 piles of stone on May 9th 2004. We must go. If we don’t go they will come and do something to us. We have to be afraid of them. They said we have to go for three days. It is time to start preparing our flat fields. I

To:	Chairperson xxxx Village	Date: 7-5-04
Subject:	To coordinate the production of 300 <i>Kyin</i> [piles] of laterite	
All the villages from Ha Ta Light Village Tract have to work, so the elder yourself must attend without fail at Win Ta Pa [Army] Camp on 8-5-04 to arrive at 10 o'clock, you are informed.		
[Sd.] Camp Commander Win Ta Pa [Army] Camp		

Order #5: An order ordering the villagers to assemble 300 *kyin* of stone for use in the Kyaik Khaw- Lay Kay car road. Each *kyin* measures 100 cubic feet [30.5 cubic metres]. Although the order specifies 'laterite', the villagers were actually required to collect stone. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #5 in Appendix F.]

have already explained to them about this. It rains and we have to plough and dibble and do many other types of work.” - “Saw Kwee Tha” (M, 56), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #90, 5/04)

“They started forcing us in the month of Tha Tin Kyaut [October 2002] to do the road. The villagers had to pack rice and go to dig the road. We could take a rest for two days. Go to dig today and then come back and stay for one or two days and then go back. They demanded many people. They demanded about 100 people. That was only

from xxxx village. There are about 200 or 300 houses in xxxx village.

... The villagers from the other villages also had to go. They villages which stayed very far also had to come. They ordered all the villages in the area of Bilin township to come and work. Khaw Po Pleh village also came. Khaw Po Pleh village is on the other side of the river. All of the villages along the side of the road such as Ta Paw, P’Nweh Klah, and on to Ler Klaw had

to do it. ... I don’t know what they are making it for. It is a road for them to carry rations. We had to go and build it for them. We had to dig it ourselves. We had to carry the earth. They didn’t use cars [bulldozers]. They forced the people to do it. We weren’t free to work. ... They specified that each village had to do 10 miles. They made the bridges with logs, so we had to cut down the trees and carry them. The bullock carts and bullocks had to carry them.” - “Saw Lah Say” (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

“Last year [2003] they demanded 100 piles of stone. They didn’t pay us but they paid the other villages. They didn’t pay our village. This year, they demanded 300 piles of stones. They said it would be 1,500 Kyat for one pile the same as last year. They allowed us to go and collect them at the same time as the villagers from Ka Meh and Ta Paw went to collect them. We told them there were no piles of stone. The villagers from Ka Meh and Ta Paw were searching for stones so we really had to go and look for them. Thirty people had to go each day. They said 30 people had to go and collect 15 piles of stone each day.”

- “Saw Tah Ler Kee” (M, 61), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #94, 5/04)

“The SPDC ordered us to go and collect stones. Each village has to collect 300 piles of stones. They said we couldn’t stay [in our village anymore] if we didn’t go because the order came from above so they have to force us to work. They didn’t like it if we didn’t work. We had to go and work for them. ...

We have to go and dig the laterite with mattocks, pickaxes and crowbars. It is very difficult. If we only have to go and collect the stones it is easy. Laterite is very difficult. They said they would spread the stone, and then they would spread the laterite. ... They said they are going to use this road for peace and development. They are going to build this road well.” - “Saw Bee Lu Lay” (M, 52), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #95, 5/04)

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Stamp:</u> Karen Buddhist Army D.K.B.A.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Progressive Buddhist Karen National Army</p> <p>To: _____ xxxx _____ Chairperson</p> <p>Subject: By order of the Second Patron Presiding monk Boe Sa Cha of the Buddhist monastery at Myaing Gyi Ngu, attendant to the presiding monk, Central Security #4 Battalion Commander Pu Ka Saw Wah from Chief of Staff Department will construct a road from the foot of Mi Zine Hill to the Pagoda Hill, so sons and daughters of all 7 days [i.e. everyone] who want to make a donation, one person from your house must come to make a donation of 5 days [of their labour]. Look forward to benefits from heaven and come without fail. Come from 20-4-04 to 22-4-04, letting [you] know and you are invited.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">From Battalion Commander Pu Ka Saw Wah Chief of Staff Department (Ah La Ka) Lt. Colonel Pu Ka Saw Wah Mi Zine Dtaung Chay Dee Kay Bee Ay</p>

Order #6: An order issued by DKBA commander Pu Ka Saw Wah for villagers to provide labour for the construction of a road to the Meh Si pagoda. Though the order calls for a ‘donation’ of labour, the villagers have little choice but to go. [A copy of the original Karen-language order may be viewed as Order #6 in Appendix F.]

“Now they are ordering the villagers to make piles of stone. They started forcing us to do it on May 8th 2004. They ordered us to do it and be finished on May 26th 2004. They said it would be our fault if we didn’t do it. The person who ordered us to do it in our area is the camp commander. The camp commander is Captain Kyaw Zin. He is the Ta Paw camp commander. It is LIB #376. According to his order, we have to collect 300 piles of stone, but we asked him to take pity on us. We reported the number of our houses. We have only 10 houses in the village so we couldn’t collect 300 piles of stone. We only had to collect 11 piles of stone. ... If we didn’t collect it, he said he would fine our village. They will fine us in money or cane, but we don’t know which yet. We had to do it when they forced us because they have weapons.” - “Saw Thu Day” (M, 35), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #96, 5/04)

“We have to send bullock carts for them. We had to send many when they carried the stones. We had to send about 40 or 50 bullock carts. It was for the piles of stone. We had to use about 10 bullock carts to carry one pile of stone. That was for only one pile. We had to use many bullock carts for 50 piles of stone. We had to carry them for more than one week. We haven’t finished carrying it yet. There are not 50 piles yet. We stopped doing it because we have to go to the fields. We refused them.” - “U Na Mu Thee” (M, 59), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #76, 5/04)

Also in April 2004, the DKBA began work on the construction of a road up to Meh Si mountain adjacent to Meh Si village in Bilin township. The DKBA had built a pagoda on the top of the mountain and then began forcing the villagers to construct a road from Ohn Daw (in Papun District) to Meh Si and then on to the pagoda. Order #6 shown on the previous page was issued to a village in Bilin township by Lieutenant Colonel Pu Ka Saw Wah, commanding officer of the DKBA Ka Saw Wah (‘White Elephant’) Battalion (also referred to in this order as Central Security Battalion #4), demanding that the village head send a quota of one person per household for a period of no less than five days to work on the road. The order repeatedly uses the word ‘donation’ to describe the request for labour. However, when no one arrived on the prescribed date, a second and somewhat more insistent order was sent, explicitly stating that the villagers should come prepared to work on the road, *“equipped with mattocks, chopping hoes, machetes, clothes, and supplies for 3 days”*. The villagers were required to sleep at the work site and were not allowed to return home until their stints were completed.

Some villagers had returned home before their time was finished after running out of clothes and medicine. The DKBA accused them of escaping and ordered them to go back to the work site for an additional 15 days.

“They [DKBA] forced us to go to build a road to a pagoda. It is a car road. The cars will go to their pagoda at Meh Si; Mi Zone in Burmese. They demanded 50 villagers to go, but only 25 of us went. They already went for two days of the three days they had to go. They provided food and materials. The villagers didn’t like it. They argued because they were not free to go. They said, ‘If you are not free, you can hire someone to go instead. One person is 1,000 Kyat for the three days.’” - “Saw Kwee Tha” (M, 56), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #90, 5/04)

“We always have to go and replace the people at Meh Si pagoda. They do not allow us to come back. They don’t allow them to come back if we don’t go to replace the person. They [DKBA] are building a road from Ohn Daw to around the pagoda. In the past they called it ‘Kyo Soh Yay Camp’. They force the villagers to dig it hard. They force them to work every day. The pagoda is on a hill. They will travel by car to the foot of the mountain and then they can climb up to the pagoda. They will make the road that climbs up the mountain beautifully. We don’t know whether they will make it a concrete road. ... They wrote in a letter, ‘You have to make the Meh Si pagoda road from Ohn Daw. You must go, so the people come to do the road.’ They didn’t like it if we didn’t go. They said that we must go. That is their order.” - “Saw Bee Lu Lay” (M, 52), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #95, 5/04)

According to a Karen township official, the SPDC has also begun to establish *San Pya Kyay Ywa*, or ‘model villages’ along the Myaing Galay-Ka Ma Maung car road. All of the villagers living in the villages that have been designated as model villages have to build their homes according to set guidelines determining style and location. Any homes that do not meet the guidelines are dismantled with orders that they should be rebuilt in keeping with the regulations. The SPDC began doing this in 2001. The villages of Noh P’Kway, Htaw Taw, Meh Neh Kay, T’Gaung Poe, Seik Kyaung, Ko Dah Gyi, Weh Pya, Mer Rer, They La Baw, Weh Pya Hta, Su Law Oh, Htee Nya Cha, Meh Kyi Hta, and Ka Ma Maung have all been designated as model villages.

“During this dry season [November 2002 – April 2003] they [SPDC] have forced more than the other years. This year they repaired both car roads. In past years the villagers had to cut and clear the brush along the sides of the road, but didn’t have to do it as nicely as this year. This year the people had to build [bridges] with wood

allowed them. These are the villages of Noh P’Kway, Htaw Taw, Meh Neh Kay, T’Gaung Poe, Seik Kyaung, Ko Dah Gyi, Weh Pya, Mer Rer, They La Baw, Weh Pya Hta, Su Law Oh, Htee Nya Cha, Meh Kyi Hta and Ka Ma Maung. It started in 2001.” - “Saw Kaw Thu” (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa’an township (Interview #6, 6/03)



Forced labour is the most prevalent and all-inclusive human rights violation taking place in Burma today. The SPDC orders the villagers to complete the labour without any form of recompense. Moreover, performing labour further limits what little time the villagers have to support their families. These villagers are answering demands issued to them by LID #44 to cut and clear away all scrub from within 50 feet alongside the Bilin - Papun car road. The villagers were not paid nor fed, and all of the materials and tools needed for the job had to be supplied by themselves. These villagers were also responsible for building the road, also under orders from the SPDC. [Photo: KHRG]

and lay stones. It was a red road in the past [a dirt road]. This year the villagers had to build all the bridges on the west side of the Baw Naw Kloh. I think that the villagers haven’t finished doing it yet. I haven’t seen that the government helps them with the road from Khoh Ni Koh. They provide them only with trucks and order them to carry stones and break them. The villagers had to carry them and lay it for them. Next year they will pour tar on the road. They laid the big types of stone and then spread the small stones and then they will pour the tar. This year they laid the big stones along it to the end. In the villages which the road passes in the plains, they have set up the villagers’ houses. They call them ‘San Pya Kyay Ywa’ [‘Model Village’]. They do it every year. Some people lost their land and didn’t get compensation. Some people’s houses were dismantled and built in the places where they

Villagers are also ordered to build or repair bridges where the roads must cross over any rivers and streams along its route. The villagers are normally ordered to cut and mill the wood to be used in the construction at their own expense. However, on occasion the SPDC does meet at least a small portion of the cost. They may either supply some of the timber or provide the villagers with money to meet the expenses. These instances however are scarce. In many cases, the soldiers instruct the villagers to cut and mill the timber and then build the bridge all at their own expense, and that any costs incurred by the villagers will be later reimbursed by the military. This never happens, and it is the villagers who find themselves out of pocket. One villager from Thaton

township told KHRG that the SPDC gave his village only 30,000 Kyat to cover the cost of the bridge that they were ordered to build. The actual cost of the bridge, however, including the milling of the timber, was close to 120,000 Kyat. The balance was met by the villagers. Another villager from Pa’an township told a KHRG researcher that they had spent over 100,000 Kyat on the bridge that they had to build, after an SPDC Army officer had initially told them that they would be reimbursed for all expenses related to the construction of the bridge. The villagers have never been repaid any amount of the money that they spent, and admit that they do not dare to ask for their refund for fear of punishment for being so bold as to ask.

“Last year we had to build a bridge at Bain Neh Daw. It is on the other side of the river. We didn’t get payment. We had to build it until it was finished. They gave us this responsibility. It took only a month. They forced each person to go for three days. They gave us nothing, but they had enough to eat themselves. I don’t know what they would have said if we didn’t go. We arranged for the villagers from the village to go by rotation. If they [SPDC] didn’t see the village head go, they would scold me and ask why we couldn’t finish working by the specified date.” - “Saw Loh Mu” (M, 45), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #93, 5/04)

“We had to make a bridge on the other side of Baw Naw Wa. We finished making one bridge and it still remains, but we have to make the bridge again [repair it]. It is not only from xxxx village, the villagers from Naw Aw La, Ha T’Reh, Ka Meh, Kyu Kyi, and Pwa Ghaw all have to go. It is for the car road. We finished one bridge. Every village made it. Noh Aw Lah and Kyu Kyu also did their separate work.”

- Pa Kee Thaw” (M, 60), village elder from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #86, 1/03)

“We had to do ‘loh ah pay’ [forced labour] hard. They forced us to build a bridge. They forced the villagers from xxxx. They were punishing the villagers from xxxx and yyyy. The reason for punishing us was because the people [KNU] had come back, so they forced us to build the bridge. We had to dig out the stumps of the trees and the bamboo. Some people were sawing logs. Some people were pulling logs. Some people had to go and mill the logs at the sawmill. Then we had to go and build it. ... We had to carry earth, dig the earth, build the bridge, saw and mill the logs for the bridge. We had to saw them ourselves. Some were sawing, some were pulling and some were carrying earth. The women were carrying the earth and the men

were making the bridge and pulling logs. It wasn’t so long ago, during this dry season [November 2002-April 2003]. ... We had to do it for a month. We weren’t free to rest. We had to work and finish it in one month. Now it is finished.” - “Naw Hla Win” (F, ?), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #58, 5/03)

“They ordered us to build a bridge in our village. We built it ourselves in our village. They paid. We hired the people to saw the wood, and then we built it ourselves. They gave only 30,000 Kyat for building fees and milling fees. One ton of wood is 60,000 Kyat. We can say we used two tons. They paid only 30,000 Kyat for two tons.” - “Naw Eh Th’Saw” (F, 32), village head from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #97, 12/02)

“During the month of Tabaung [Burmese month corresponding to March] the Burmese ordered us to build a bridge at the Na Gyi River. We had to spend over 100,000 Kyat when we went to build it. We had to buy wood. We had to mill the wood.



In early 2002, soldiers from LID #44 came to replace those from LID #66 who were stationed in the district. The newly arrived soldiers then ordered the villagers to build new Army camps for them. All of the materials needed for the construction had to be supplied by the villagers. The villagers in this photo are carrying roofing thatch for use in the construction of one of those newly established camps. Many villages in Thaton District are ordered to provide the SPDC and/or the DKBA with 1,000 shingles thatch each year. Most of this finds its way into the commercial markets with all of the profits going to the officers. None of this money is ever seen by the villagers who actually do the work. [Photo: KHRG]

We had to carry it. They said they would repay us our money. The five villages of www, xxxx, yyyy, zzzz and vvvv had to do it. They didn’t repay

any money to those five villages. They told us they would pay, but until now they haven't paid. We can't ask them for it." - "Pa Hsa Ker" (M, 70), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #92, 5/04)

Villagers are also regularly ordered to cut back the scrub and brush growing alongside the roads. This is done to provide wide swathes of open ground, or 'killing zones', flanking the roads and thus make it much more difficult for the KNLA to ambush SPDC Army units that are using the road. It also makes it difficult for anyone attempting to cross the road, whether be a KNLA unit or a group of IDPs, without being detected. Villagers living along the Kyaik Khaw-Lay Kay road have told KHRG that they have been ordered to clear the sides of the road of all vegetation down to ground level within 50 feet [15 metres] of either side of the road. Similar to the orders given when forced to repair a road; the villagers are typically assigned a segment of the road that they are responsible for clearing. This is usually specified as being from their own village to the next. This type of work results in many injuries as the villagers unearth or step on landmines that have been planted on the flanks of the road [also see the 'Landmines' section]. The SPDC, the DKBA, and the KNLA are all guilty of planting landmines alongside the roads, and those stepped on by the villagers may have been planted by any one of these groups. The SPDC does not compensate any villager who does happen to step on a landmine and is wounded, maimed, or killed while cutting back the bushes beside a road. No compensation is paid to the surviving family members of those killed, and anyone who is wounded yet survives must pay for their own medical treatment.

"We had to cut the bushes. We had to cut them level with the ground. We had to cut them on both sides of the road from the other side of Baw Naw. We have had to cut it for one or two years already. We always have to cut them. We have to cut them every day. We have had to do it a lot this year. We had to dig the road. When the road has potholes, we have to fill them. They said we have to carry the earth with baskets and mattocks." - "Naw Ba Kee" (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

"We had to cut the brush beside the road. They said that they couldn't see over it. They said, 'You come to make the road. If you are hurt by the Karen soldiers' landmine, we will not give you compensation. You have to control it. You have to organise it.' I told them, 'I can't organise it. I won't come if I can't organise it. I don't dare to die yet.' They said, 'You come to work, so you have to organise it.'" - "Naw Ba Kee" (F, 40), village

head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

"When we went to repair the car road we went together with the villagers from Lay Kay. There is a camp there. The villagers from Lay Kay, Paya Raw, Thu K'Bee, Ler Po, Kyo Wai and Htee Si Baw, then down to Meh Theh Pwoh, Noh Law PLaw, Ta Paw, Ler Klaw, Shwe Oak, Mya Lay and Th'Waw Pya all have to go and cut the brush along the road. They said they would take action if we didn't go to cut the brush. We don't know what type of action. They have told us one or two times that they would relocate the villages which didn't obey. They said that if they didn't like xxxx village, they would drive us to Lay Kay and Lay Kaw Htee, there are many places. They said they would relocate us there. They said it was directed by the Division Commander. It was when Division #44 came." - "Saw Cho Aung" (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

"We had to cut the brush at the road, go repair the bridge and go to carry rice for them. We had to start cutting from the Khoh Loh Kloh [Salween River] to Paya Raw. The people from Lay Kay cut until the Khoh Loh Kloh. The people from xxxx cut from the Khoh Loh Kloh to Paya Raw. The people from Paya Raw cut to Kyo Wai. Kyo Wai cuts to Htee Pa Doh Hta. Htee Pa Doh Hta cuts until Yoh Kla and Yoh Kla cuts until Meh Baw Kee." - "Saw Dee Kay" (M, 50), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #53, 3/03)

"We had to cut the brush and dig the road to be the same level with the ground like a tar road. We did it with the people's energy. People build car roads with machines, but we did it with the people's energy. There were puddles and we had to carry logs and fill them. We had to dig it to level with the ground and cut the brush for 50 feet on each side. We had to cut and clear the bushes and small trees. Our village had to cut for over a mile. After we cut and levelled, we had to dig ditches on the sides. It was so long that we couldn't do it. We did it only to be finished in name. In the morning we had to go and work on the road. We weren't free to work for ourselves. We had to go and dig it for them two times. It rained after we finished the digging. The small water [trench] collapsed and filled up again." - "Saw Cho Aung" (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

Demands for Building Materials

“They demanded wood and bamboo. Sometimes they demanded 100 shingles of thatch from each [village] section. We had to make them. Each house had to make 10 shingles. They demanded thatch, wood and bamboo every week.” - “Saw Lah Say” (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

Villagers who live near SPDC or DKBA camps are regularly ordered to provide building materials such as logs, bamboo, and thatch to those camps. Some of these materials are used to build new fences, barracks, warehouses, and homes for the soldiers’ families, in addition to repairing the existing ones – the villagers know this because they are often then forced to do the work with the materials they have provided. However, the vast quantity of materials demanded by some camps far outweighs their need, and the materials are actually sold by the soldiers to make money for the commanding officers. The villagers must first go out into the forest to cut the materials before transporting them to the Army camp. The villagers are expected to use their own tools to cut the building materials as none are ever supplied by the SPDC or the DKBA. Whenever the villagers are ordered to supply logs to the Army camp, they must use their own bullock carts to haul them the distance. Some of these logs can be up to 5.5 metres [18 feet] in length, and 70

centimetres [27 inches] in circumference, weighing several tonnes. The villagers are not paid for their labour, or for any of the materials that they provide.

“They forced us to cut small logs, bamboo and thatch to build the camp. They are forcing us a lot. We always have to send these things once a year. We have to send them to Lay Kay Army camp. It takes one hour to walk there. ... There are many different sizes of logs. Sometimes they are two or three handspans [45-70 cms. / 18-27 inches] in circumference. Some of them are 6

cubits, 10 cubits or 12 cubits [2.7, 4.6, 5.5 metres / 9, 15, 18 feet] in length. Sometimes they demand 200 pieces of bamboo and sometimes they demand 50 pieces. Sometimes they demand 400 pieces. They demand 2,000 shingles of thatch. They pay us nothing. We carry them for free.” - “Naw Hser Paw” (F, 43), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #24, 2/02)

“On the 7th [May 2004] in the evening, we had to carry two bullock cart loads of wood posts for them [DKBA] to Htee Nya Cha. We had to carry it to their children and wives’ houses. When we arrived there, they didn’t feed us even a pot of rice. We had to come back and find food to eat at our friends’ houses. They paid nothing for them. When they came to force us to do it, we villagers had to gather and collect the fees for the bullock carts. We hired one bullock cart and we went to carry it for them ourselves. We paid 5,000 Kyat for the bullock cart. They didn’t

pay the hire fees for the bullock cart for us. They didn’t listen to us. They just needed it to arrive there.” - “Saw Bee Lu Lay” (M, 52), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #95, 5/04)

“Yes, they demand bamboo. When they demand it, they don’t only demand 10 pieces, they demand 100 pieces. The size depends on what they need. It is not exact. If they need 15 cubits [6.8 metres / 22.5 feet], they order us to get 15 cubits. They demand 100 pieces. Sometimes they demand 70 or 80 pieces. It is not regular. It depends on what

<u>Stamp:</u> Karen Buddhist Army D.K.B.A.	
To: xxxx Village Head	Date: 14.1.04
Informing you in a few words. Don’t waste time preparing the 1,000 [shingles] of thatch you have to give. [Instead,] When this letter is received, send at once their cost price of (40,000), forty thousand Kyat, quickly.	
[Sd.] Company (x) No (x) Battalion D.K.B.A	

Order #7: This order, issued by the DKBA explicitly informs the village head not to bother preparing the 1,000 shingles of roofing thatch that they were earlier ordered to provide, but to send their (inflated) market price of 40,000 Kyat. [A copy of the original Karen-language order may be viewed as Order #7 in Appendix F.]

they need. They use it for making fences, building their camp and for warehouses. They don't pay and we have to send it to their camp by bullock cart. The people sell one piece of 'wa klu' bamboo [a species of giant bamboo used for house posts] for 300 Kyat." - "Saw Cho Aung" (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

"Sometimes they demand 500 pieces of bamboo from the whole village. They have also demanded 1,000 pieces. We had to share and divide the amount for each house. Each house has to cut 10 or 20 pieces of bamboo. We then have to carry them to Ah Hoh Wa village. The chairperson there has to continue sending them on to LIB #3." - "Naw Tah Tah" (F, 24), villager from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #99, 11/03)

"They demanded everything. They demanded wood, bamboo, timber and thatch. The Burmese were going to build a school at Lay Kay. They ordered the villagers to help them. The villagers had to help with money, wood and bamboo because they demanded it. Thu K'Bee and Paya Raw paid 50,000 Kyat. Our village only had to pay 30,000 Kyat because it is small." - "Saw Dee Kay" (M, 50), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #53, 3/03)

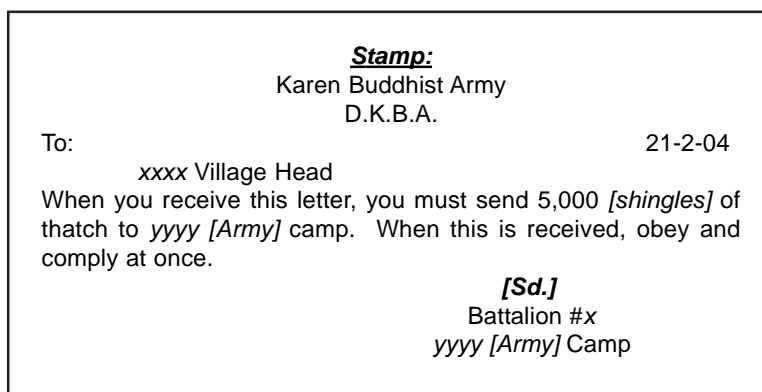
Some villages are told that if they are not able to supply the requested amount, they can send the prevailing market value of the materials instead. However, the amounts that they are ordered to pay are usually significantly higher than the local market rates. In some cases, as is demonstrated by Order #7 shown on the previous page, some Army officers specifically tell the villagers to send money rather than the bamboo or thatch. This order, issued to a village in Bilin township in January 2004, clearly informs the

villagers not to bother sending the requested 1,000 shingles of thatch, but to send their cost price of 40,000 Kyat instead. In this case, the market price quoted by the officer has been grossly inflated. "Daw Khu Pu" [Interview #56], a villager from the village that this order was issued to, had told a KHRG researcher on a separate occasion that 1,000 shingles of thatch, depending on the type, would only be worth 20,000 to 30,000 Kyat. This officer is clearly interested only in making more money for himself, particularly as he sent an order identical to this one to a neighbouring village. Ordering the villagers to send money rather than the actual thatch saves the officer and his men the intermediary step of having to sell the thatch. This way they get the money right away.

"We had to pay the Burmese for the roof of their camp. We had to send thatch, but if we couldn't send it to them we could send money." - "Saw Dee Kay" (M, 50), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #53, 3/03)

Thaton District's reputation as a source of thatch for the commercial market has been

seen as an opportunity by some officers to demand huge quantities of thatch from the villagers which they then sell for personal profit. Over the past few years, the DKBA has been annually demanding 2,000 shingles of thatch from each village in Pa'an township and some of the villages in Bilin township. The thatch must be sent by bullock cart to the DKBA #333 Brigade headquarters at Ohn Daw (in Papun District). Some villages must resort to buying thatch just to be able to send enough to the DKBA, while others are able to simply send money instead. While some of this thatch was used to repair their camps and the homes of the soldiers' families, much of it would have been sold to raise money for the DKBA. Depending on the particular type of palm used to make the thatch, the local market value for the entire 2,000 shingles would be worth something in the range of 40,000 to



Order #8: An order issued by a DKBA #333 Brigade officer for 5,000 shingles of roofing thatch. Orders of this magnitude have become common of the DKBA in recent years. Thaton District is known as a source of thatch for the commercial market in Burma, and many officers from the SPDC and the DKBA have seen this as an opportunity for making money. It is likely that the vast majority, if not all of this thatch would find its way in to those markets to be sold for the profit of the officers. The village head had arranged for his villagers to send 3,000 shingles of thatch in 3 installments of 1,000 shingles each. They were not paid for their work. [A copy of the original Karen-language order may be viewed as Order #8 in Appendix F.]

60,000 Kyat. To put this into perspective, this equates to being between roughly four and six months worth of wages for the average villager. The villagers are not compensated for their labour.

“We always have to give thatch once a year to the Ko Per Baw [‘Yellow headbands’; slang for the DKBA]. We recently went to give them thatch, but it was not complete. They demanded 1,500 shingles of thatch. We sent only 1,150. I told them, ‘Let us rest for a year.’ They said, ‘Elder sister, we can’t let you rest.’ I said, ‘Pwa! You have said that you came to make peace. You have come and stay here peacefully in the big houses together with your wives and children, but you are still forcing us.’ They said, ‘We must always force you to do only thatch.’ They demanded 2,000 shingles of thatch every year, but this year they reduced it to 1,500. We have to give it to them because we don’t have money. We have to send them to Ohn Daw, to Taught Deh Gone.” - “Daw Paw Ghay” (F, 50), village head from xxxx village (Interview #75, 7/03)

“They [DKBA] demand 2,000 shingles of thatch each time. We carry it for them to Ohn Daw or pay money. Last year there was no bullock cart road yet. They ordered us to do it and carry it. We had to go among the mountains. It was very bad and the road was no good, so we paid them 40,000 Kyat. It was for 40,000 Kyat. They said that 100 shingles was 2,000 Kyat. We paid them 40,000 Kyat. They said it was for the roofs of their soldiers’ families’ houses. ... They don’t like it if we don’t pay them. They would fine and beat us if we didn’t pay them. Here every village pays them. No village dares to stay without paying

them.” - “Saw Cho Aung” (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

“When the DKBA come they force us to work. They force us to porter and guide them. ... They demand thatch. They demand 2,000 shingles of thatch each time. This year, 100 shingles of thatch is 1,200 Kyat. We have to give it to them every year. If we don’t give it, they demand money instead.” - “Saw Loh Mu” (M, 45), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #93, 5/04)

“The monk soldiers [DKBA] demanded thatch. They demand it regularly once a year. They demand 1,000 shingles of thatch from our villagers. They demand 1,000 shingles of thatch once a year. They don’t pay anything. We have to make it for them for free. ... They told me that if we didn’t give it to them, they would put the villagers in jail cells and take action against them.” - “Saw Thu Day” (M, 35), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #96, 5/04)

<u>Stamp:</u>				
Karen Buddhist Army D.K.B.A.				
List of the village tract hill toddy thatch quotas:				
1. Ah Hoe Wa tract	Hill toddy thatch			4,000 [shingles]
2. P’Ya Seik tract	“ “ “			4,000
3. Ka Dee Pu	“ “ “			15,000
4. Neh Kya	“ “ “			2,000
5. Kya Kwin	“ “ “			2,000
6. T’Nyin Gone	“ “ “			4,000
7. Meh Na Kaung	“ “ “			2,000
8. Kwin K’Lay	“ “ “			2,000
9. Na Kyi	“ “ “			2,000
10. Shwe Laung Inn	“ “ “			2,000
11. Pyin Tha	“ “ “			1,000
12. Meh Lan	“ “ “			2,000

Order #9: This undated order was issued to villages in early 2005 demanding quotas of roofing thatch from a number of different village tracts. Village tracts in this area typically comprise 5-10 villages. All thatch is demanded without payment and the time spent collecting and weaving the thatch detracts from time that the villagers would otherwise spend trying to raise enough food for their families. [A copy of the original Karen-language order may be viewed as Order #9 in Appendix F.]

“They demanded thatch. They counted and it depended on the number of houses. There are 40 houses [she had previously said 60 houses] in our village. They demanded 10 shingles from each house. How much thatch would you get from 40 houses? They would get 400 shingles of thatch from 40 houses. They demanded it for free. They didn’t pay money. K’haw lah [a type of palm] thatch is 2,000 Kyat for 100 shingles. Loh lah [a different type of palm] thatch is 3,000 Kyat for 100 shingles. They didn’t pay us money. We had to do it for free.” - “Daw Khu Pu” (F, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #56, 11/03)

In areas such as southern Pa'an and Thaton townships where there are many Army camps, villages may face several demands from a number of different camps at the same time. Some villages have to fulfil demands for both the SPDC and the DKBA. The soldiers rarely show any leniency to villages that must comply with several simultaneous orders, demanding only that the materials be delivered to the camp by the due date. One such example, however, occurred on September 8th 2004, when the village head from xxxx village was summoned to a meeting by IB #xx [see Order #10]. At the meeting, Deputy Battalion Commander aaaa demanded that the village send him a quantity of bamboo. The village head complained that they were already under obligation to supply thatch to the SPDC Army camp at yyyy and would be unable to arrange any villagers to cut the bamboo until they had completed preparing the thatch. In a rare display of compassion, aaaa agreed to allow the villagers to complete the other demand before attending to his.

Perhaps reflecting the uneasy alliance existing between the SPDC and the DKBA, in 2004 the

DKBA told villagers to prioritise their demands over those given by SPDC units, stating that *"This is our area. It does not belong to the Burmese"*. Local SPDC Army officers, obviously unhappy with this, replied that the villagers must obey their orders before paying any heed to those issued by the DKBA. An SPDC officer told one village head, *"Burma is our country. They don't have a country. ... They don't have any real land"*. Following this, the villagers were at a loss as to whose orders should be obeyed, knowing full well that to go one way or the other would likely result in consequences. On a number of occasions, villagers who have not responded to forced labour demands fast enough have been

beaten by SPDC Army soldiers [see the *"Killings, Detention, and Torture"* section].

"We took the responsibility to build the school, so they didn't demand it [other forced labour] from our village. Division ordered that xxxx village must build a basic education primary school for self-reliance. They [DKBA] told us not to go to collect the piles of stone and repair the road. They told us not to go to send the thatch, but they [SPDC] wrote us a letter. They informed the DKBA, but the DKBA said [to the villagers], 'You must send it [thatch]. This is our area. It doesn't belong to the Burmese.' The Burmese

said, 'Burma is our country. They [DKBA] don't have a country. They changed from KNU to DKBA. They are now taking peace with their weapons. They don't have any real land.' After they said that we didn't know what to do [whose order to obey]. We only know that we still have to send the thatch and bamboo." - "Saw Heh Taw" (M, 51), village head and school teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #74, 5/04)

<u>Stamp:</u>	
Frontline #xx Infantry Battalion Column #x	
To:	Chairperson xxxx Village
Subject: <u>Come to meet</u>	
Regarding the above subject, the yyyy Camp Column Commander wants to meet, so come to meet on 8.9.2004 to arrive at 1000 hours [10 am], you are informed.	
[Sd.] 6.9.04 yyyy [Army] Camp	

Order #10: An order summoning the village head to attend a meeting at the local Army camp. At the meeting, the deputy battalion commander demanded bamboo. The village head replied to this complaining that they were already working to fulfil orders for thatch from another nearby Army camp and that his villagers would not be able to collect the bamboo until the other demands had been met. Many villages that are located close to numerous different camps may face multiple overlapping or conflicting demands from each of those camps. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #10 in Appendix F.]

The villagers are all too aware of the punishments that may await them if they fail to comply with the orders issued. One villager from Pa'an township told KHRG in 2001 that he was beaten with a piece of bamboo as round as a man's fist by a DKBA soldier when his village did not supply the required amount of thatch.

"When they [DKBA] came to our village they came to demand thatch. They demanded 20 thatch shingles from each house. We couldn't get enough thatch when they came to demand it, so we reported to them, but they didn't believe us. ... After they demanded the thatch and we

couldn't find enough thatch, they called me down from my house and hit me five times. They beat me with bamboo as big as a fist and 3 pla [137 cms. / 4.5 feet] long. They told me that I said to them that there was no thatch so they were angry and beat me. They told me, 'Later, don't ever say

that there is no thatch.' They didn't say anything else and turned back their heads [went on their way]. Then they went to the village head's house." - "Saw Hla Than" (M, 37), villager from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #77, 4/01)

Other Forms of Forced Labour

While portering and work on the roads are for finite periods of time, other forms of forced labour are demanded on a rotational, but more permanent basis. These types of labour include sending villagers as *set tha* ('messengers') or performing labour at Army camps. Both DKBA and SPDC Army officers tell village heads to have one or several villagers available on call either at the village or at the Army camp to send messages and written order documents for the officers. At the Army camps villagers are ordered to perform menial tasks such as construct fences around the camp, dig trenches, build barracks for the soldiers, fetch water, and cut firewood.

"They always demand 'set tha' ['messengers']. They demand bicycle 'set tha' and foot 'set tha'. One person for bicycle 'set tha' has to stay on standby and one person for foot 'set tha' must always stay on standby also. They force the people to send letters and go tell things. It is always two people per day. Sometimes they force them to send letters. Mostly they force them to send letters and tell things at Lay Kay. Sometimes they force people to go as far as Yoh Klah. If they force people to go to Kyo Wai, they have to go to Kyo Wai." - "Naw Hla Win" (F, ?), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #58, 5/03)

"We had to do everything for their camp; build the huts, cut bamboo and wood. We had to do thatch, bamboo, and even punji stakes. We had to make everything. We couldn't go to do it anymore. We went 5 or 10 or 15 people. It was not regular. If they demanded 20 people, then 20

people had to go." - "Saw Say Tee" (M, 48), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #57, 5/03)

"We had to go and build things. We had to go and build the place where they lived [a barracks]. They built warehouses to store the rice. We had to go and dig trenches. When they ordered us to go, they could force us to do whatever they wanted. If they ordered us to dig a trench, we had to dig a trench. If they ordered us to build their living place, we had to build their living place." - "Saw Lah Say" (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

"When the villagers had to do 'loh ah pay' [forced labour] for the Burmese they had to build buffalo sheds, pig sties, roof barracks, cut bamboo and cut firewood. We always had to do this." - "Saw Play Kee" (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

<p>To:</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Mother [Village] Head xxxx Village</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">Mother, tomorrow on 16-5-2004 send <i>set tha</i> [messengers] to arrive at 0600 [o'clock].</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 40px;">With respect, [Sd.] Frontline La [Infantry] #xx Company #x yyyy [Army] Camp</p>	<p>15-5-2004</p>
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Order #11: The village head who received this order sent one villager for *set tha* ('messenger') duty as ordered. The villager was then forced to carry rations and a letter to a neighbouring Army camp. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #11 in Appendix F.]

Villagers are also forced to stand sentry along the roads, at bridges, and along the natural gas pipeline that runs adjacent to the Martaban-Rangoon car road and railway. The Army orders that the villagers construct sentry huts at regular intervals along the road where they must wait and act as sentries on a rotating schedule. The distances

between these huts vary depending on the road and which battalion is charged with protecting it. The sentries are supposed to keep a look out for resistance forces crossing the road or placing landmines on it. Those standing sentry on the pipeline are supposed to report any suspicious activity

to prevent it from being sabotaged or blown up. If the villagers see anything they are supposed to report it to the next sentry post until the message relay reaches an Army camp. One villager from Bilin township told KHRG that his village had been ordered to provide three sentries for the pipeline every night for the past year. The sentry huts on the pipeline are located only 200 metres [220 yards] apart. Any villager who falls asleep while on watch is fined, while those who fail to report KNLA movements can be arrested and beaten if the SPDC should learn of it later. Another villager from Pa'an township maintained that he and his fellow villagers even had to sweep the roads clear of leaves. This is done presumably to show the soldiers that there are no landmines planted under them.

"They force us to sentry the gas pipeline. They force us to go to A'Leh Sakan [Army camp]. Three villagers must go as 'set tha' [messengers]. Three villagers have to go and sentry at night. It is close to yyyy village on the Pay T'Ya road. We have to go and stand sentry at the fork of the road at the zzzz pagoda. The xxxx village sentry hut is there." - "Saw Kyaw Thu" (M, 40) village tract head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #69, 11/03)

"When I went to the battalion [camp], the battalion commander told me that we have to report to them if we see the jungle people [KNU]. He said, 'Don't ask them to come and destroy the gas pipeline. If they destroy the gas pipeline, we will order the villagers to repay it. If you see them, tell them and plead with them that if they destroy it, you also will be hurt and destroyed. If you see the jungle people, tell them not to come to destroy it.' He also said, 'The villagers are tired and we are also tired. If they come to destroy it, you will have to stand sentry on it. They have come to cut it off and make it explode so now your villagers will have to stand sentry for it again.' Last year [2002] they stopped us standing sentry for nine months. Now we have to restart standing sentry from the month of Tan Ku [Burmese month corresponding to April] until the current month of Ta Saung Mon [November]. They haven't stopped it yet. Three people have to stand sentry each night. The soldiers stand sentry and the villagers also stand sentry. They [SPDC] stand sentry and they also patrol. When we wait as sentries, we must send the information to Thee Ho Army camp. They are from [LID] #66. They tell them [the sentries], 'Don't fall asleep. If you fall asleep, we will fine you'. They do not allow the villagers to sleep in the night. They stay one furlong [200 metres / 220 yards] away from our place [sentry hut]. If the people [KNLA] come in

the night, we must go and report it to them. ... We have had to [stand] sentry on the gas pipeline everyday for almost one year now. The villagers are faced with many problems." - "Saw Kyaw Thu" (M, 40) village tract head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #69, 11/03)

"We had to go and act as sentries on the road near Ta Paw. It is over the Baw Naw River. We stayed at the side of the road. We had to wait and sleep. We set up a hut and cooked rice and we had to stay like that. They didn't pay us. We had to bring our own food. ... The cars are travelling [on the road] and they are worried that the people [KNLA] will plant the things [landmines]. While we are waiting by the road we have to sweep and clear the road. Sometimes when the leaves fall down we have to sweep them off the road. Five or ten people have to go each time. It is for three days and then another group replaces us." - "Saw Ler Wah" (M, 35), refugee from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #82, 4/02)

Forced Labour on SPDC and DKBA Commercial Projects

The SPDC maintains several money-making ventures in Thaton District, particularly in Thaton and Pa'an townships. Some of these, such as a rubber tyre factory in Thaton and a sugar refinery and alcohol distillery in Bilin, are managed by the military and operated by paid workers. Others, such as the Myaing Galay cement factory in Pa'an township, use unpaid convict labour as at least part of their workforce. These convicts, many of whom are taken from the *Won Saung* #2 internment camp located on the opposite bank of the Salween River in Pa'an, are never paid for any of the work that they do [for further details see '**Convict Labour**' below as well as the previously published KHRG report, "**Convict Porters: The Brutal Abuse of Prisoners on Burma's Frontlines**" (KHRG #2000-06, 20/12/2000)].

In addition to these factories, the SPDC and the DKBA have extensive rubber, fruit, sugarcane, coconut, and cashew plantations as well as a plantation raising various trees with medicinal properties. The SPDC also has rice fields which it uses to grow rice for its soldiers. These fields and plantations are all built on land that was originally confiscated from local villagers. Some of these plantations have been around since the 1960s and 70s, but KHRG researchers report that the SPDC has recently increased the activity. In December 2004, the SPDC confiscated 5,000 acres of farmland belonging to villagers from Bilin township to make way for an immense rubber plantation to be jointly operated by the SPDC and Rangoon-based company, Max Myanmar [also see Photos 7-50 through 7-52 in the '**Food and Livelihoods**' section of "**KHRG Photo Set 2005-A**" (KHRG #2005-P1, 27/5/2005), for photographs of the plantation]. On December 3rd 2004, Chief of the Bureau of Special Operations #4 (covering Karen and Mon States, as well as Tenasserim Division) and SPDC member Lieutenant General Maung Bo, together with representatives of Max Myanmar, visited the site and confiscated the land from the villagers who lived there. In May 2005, the General and Max Myanmar representatives, including the company's chairperson, U Zaw Zaw, returned to the plantation to inspect the progress that had been made. The visit was reported in the official *New Light of Myanmar* newspaper (English version) on May 9th 2005: "At the briefing hall of Max Myanmar company which is engaged in growing 5000 acres of rubber in Shweyaungpya village in Bilin Township, U Zaw Zaw Chairman of the company [Max Myanmar] briefed Lt-Gen Maung Bo and party on cultivation of rubber. Lt-Gen Maung Bo urged officials concerned to extend cultivation of rubber in the interests of the

State, the region and in their own. Next, they inspected rubber plantations by car. According to the rubber growing project of Max Myanmar, 1000 acres will be put under rubber in 2004-2005, 2000 acres in 2005-2006 and the remaining 2000 in 2006-2007."³ The villagers were not compensated in any way for the loss of their land, yet Max Myanmar is regularly cited in the *New Light of Myanmar* for making donations to sporting events, local education projects, and for the benefit of the families of SPDC Army soldiers. On February 4th 2005, the company donated 10 Million Kyat to "Tatmadaw families of regiments and units" in Irrawaddy Division⁴. Moreover, according to *The Irrawaddy* news magazine, U Zaw Zaw is ranked among Burma's ten most successful business tycoons; he is a member of the elitist Myanmar Football Federation and is also the president of the Myanmar Tennis Federation⁵, which has been responsible for hosting international tennis tournaments such as the Davis Cup. Aside from its interests in rubber plantations, Max Myanmar also has business interests in the import-export of heavy machinery and road and railroad construction. Though no evidence has been thus far uncovered to confirm it, it is quite possible that Max Myanmar may also be involved in the many road construction projects being undertaken in the district.

Villagers in Thaton township face a particularly hard time with land confiscation. Much of the villagers' land is confiscated and destroyed to allow for the plantations. No compensation is given for the land and to add insult to injury, the villagers are then forced to work on these plantations. They have to erect fences around the plantations and take responsibility for their security, protecting them from wild animals and birds and ensuring that resistance forces stay away. Some villagers are ordered by the DKBA to sleep in the plantations overnight during the dry season in case a fire breaks out. If one does start and some of the plantation is damaged, the DKBA fines the villagers the cost of that which was lost. These plantations are not a way of making money for the village, nor are they for development, but rather generate profits only for the SPDC leadership, its corporate cronies, and in some cases the DKBA. Essentially the villagers are working their own land, but solely for the benefit of the SPDC and the DKBA. Many villagers in Thaton township are forced to plant coconut, sunflower, eucalyptus, cashew, teak, and rubber plantations. The vast majority, if not all of the harvests of such plantations are taken by the SPDC and sold to make money for the commanding officers.

A vast 5,000 acre sugarcane plantation also exists in Thaton township, all of it on land which was confiscated without compensation from the local villagers. The villagers were ordered to cut down all the trees and dig out all of the stumps in preparation for sowing the field with the sugarcane, which they were also later ordered to do. Each year at the completion of the harvest, the villagers are also forced to mill the cane and boil down the juice to crystallise it. The villagers have not received payment for any of the work that they have been forced to do.

out in the dry season, so the villagers have to go and sleep there to watch for them. If a fire burns the plantation, they will fine the villagers for the cost. The SPDC orders them and they only plant it. - “Saw Kaw Thu” (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa’an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

“They stay at A’Leh Sakan. They have an Army camp there. They have a sugarcane plantation there. The Burmese grow it. They grow 5,000 acres of sugarcane. In 2000 they forced the villagers from Shwe Yaung Pya village to come



The farmland shown in this photo was confiscated from villagers in Thaton township to make way for the vast 5,000 acre rubber plantation co-operated by the SPDC and Rangoon-based company Max Myanmar. The villagers were not compensated in any way for the confiscation of their farms or the loss of their livelihoods.
[Photo: KHRG]

“We had to go and plant small rubber and cashew trees, teak trees and another one we call ‘t’ku’ [a type of fig]. We always had to go and plant. We planted them in the beginning of the dry season, in Tawthalin, Thadinkyauk and Ta Saung Mone [Burmese months corresponding to September, October, and November respectively]. They planted and poured water on them.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

“They [DKBA] make plantations growing rubber, cashews and coconuts for oil. The civilians have to make fences. They had to go and cut and clear the grass and bushes every year. Usually Bo Maung Kyi [DKBA #333 Brigade commander] sends his soldiers to force people and they stay near the Khoh Ni Koh and at the foot of the mountains. They stay among the rubber plantations. The villagers from the villages near there always have to cut and clear the grass. When the fence is broken they have to go and repair it for them. They worry that a fire will break

and work in the sugarcane plantation every day. They had to dig out the stumps and plant the sugarcane. The villagers weren’t free to work for themselves. When the time to boil the sugarcane comes, 50 villagers from each village have to go and boil it for a day. They do this every day until the sugarcane plantation is finished. They don’t give any payment to the villagers.” - “Saw Kyaw Thu” (M, 40) village tract head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #69, 11/03)

The DKBA has been heavily involved in logging in the district. In fact, much of the revenue being raised by the DKBA in Thaton District originates from logging. Villagers are ordered to fell the trees, transport them to the saw mills, mill the wood and then send the milled wood to the DKBA. Often nothing is paid for the wood or for the labour. Like the thatch discussed above, some of the wood is used by the DKBA to build houses for their families, but the rest is sold for a profit. KHRG researchers say that this logging has devastated the forests in Bilin township with only saplings and brush left where there

used to be trees. The KNU, who has been trying to control widespread logging in the region, has been unable to do anything to stop it. The KNU has prohibited the cutting of *pyin g'doh*, (ironwood), and *inn* (mahogany), in Pa'an township, but DKBA and SPDC control is so firm in the township that this is almost impossible to enforce. The villagers are caught in the middle of these conflicting interests, unsure whose orders to obey. If they obey the edict laid down by the KNU, they would have problems with the DKBA and the SPDC, not only for their failure to complete the work, but also for supporting the resistance. Conversely, if they were to obey the orders from the DKBA or the SPDC, they may have problems with the KNU. A village head in Pa'an township told a KHRG researcher that the DKBA had announced in 2004 that they would only process the old trees that had fallen down and not cut new ones. Some villagers continued to cut down trees after the DKBA had announced this and those villagers were fined. This however had less to do with any concern for the environment and more to do with access to the timber and the money raised from its sale.

"When we do logging for them [DKBA], we have to use bulls and bullock carts. We have to carry it by bullock carts and keep it around Noh Aw Lah monastery. There are a lot of logs around Noh Aw Lah monastery. They are ordering us to send more and more bullock carts in the village tract. The bullock carts can't haul it all yet. They are waiting there. They will mill it, so they haul it and gather it around the monastery. Noh Aw Lah monastery is destroyed, so they will rebuild it also. They said they would build the monastery, but for each three posts, only one post is for the monastery. We don't know about the other posts. They will use them for something." - "Saw Bee Lu Lay" (M, 52), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #95, 5/04)

"We have to carry logs for them [DKBA]. They are t'law aw [mahogany] and many other types of logs. They said they were building offices and houses for their soldiers. Many of their people demand it. They are #333 DKBA [Brigade]. They have their camp at Ohn Daw." - "Saw Kwee Tha" (M, 56), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #90, 5/04)

"Now there are many people doing logging. Many people are doing logging in 1st Brigade [Thaton District]. They mill the logs at sawmills." - "Saw Lah Say" (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

"They [DKBA] demanded small logs [like] t'la aw [mahogany] that they can divide [mill]. They came to demand bullock carts to carry them. They ordered the people to carry it to them by bullock cart. When they demanded bullock carts and the villagers didn't obey, they shot their guns into the villages and tortured them. I didn't see that the villagers were paid." - "Saw Kaw Thu" (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa'an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

"T'la aw [mahogany] is the wood of greatest value in the area. The civilians do not have enough food to eat because the country doesn't have peace. At the time when the leaves of the t'la aw trees fall down they collect them, weave them [into shingles] and sell them. This is one way in which they make a living. When they [DKBA] are demanding these, the civilians don't even have roofs for their own houses. They get angry and do as they want when the villagers don't give them thatch to use. This year they demanded 2,000 shingles of thatch from each village. They use it to roof their own houses. They use it for their camps. They use a lot of thatch every year." - "Saw Kaw Thu" (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa'an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

"They [DKBA] said they would only do the old ones [trees] that had fallen down. They wouldn't do the new ones, but there are new ones. There are many trees. They said that they don't cut them down. They said that they would mill all the trees that they had finished cutting down." - "Saw Tah Ler Kee" (M, 61), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #94, 5/04)

"Now they have stopped it. They stopped all of it. There is nothing left either. There is some t'la aw [mahogany] left, but only a few. During the last dry season, some people didn't know whether they could or not, so they cut the trees down. When the Ko Per Baw ['Yellow headbands'; slang for the DKBA] came, they fined them. They fined anyone who came. Nobody is doing it now. There are only a few trees remaining." - "U Lah Paw" (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #91, 5/04)

In addition to their logging concessions, the DKBA also has a trucking and transport company which it uses to raise much of its revenue. The DKBA uses its trucks to transport goods to and from central Burma as well as to and from Thailand. Much of the produce from their plantations and the timber produced by their logging interests is transported in this manner.

“Now they [SPDC] are giving them [the DKBA] the opportunity to drive trucks long distances so they are buying and selling goods and carrying the goods up and down. They do it as they like. ... They do logging, plantations, and transportation. They build roads and bridges so the trucks can travel. Really they have to do it themselves, but they always force the civilians to do it.” - “Saw Kaw Thu” (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa’an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

Forced Labour Fees

The regular demands for forced labour severely limit the amount of time in which villagers are available to work in their fields or look after their families, so villagers try to avoid performing the labour as often as possible. Certain forms of forced labour like ‘emergency portering’ [as discussed above under **‘Porters’**] are unavoidable, but for most other forms there is a ‘fee’ that can be paid to avoid having to go for the labour. Villagers speak of having to pay ‘porter fees’, ‘set tha fees’, or ‘wontan fees’. These refer to the different system of fees payable for each type of labour that is demanded. Some villagers find that they have to pay a number of these fees either to the same or a number of different Army camps. Villagers can also hire other villagers to go in their place. The fees for this may range anywhere from 150 Kyat to 1,000 Kyat per day. The cost of hiring another villager depends both on the type and duration of the forced labour that the hired villager has to perform. The money for these fees is usually paid directly to the people who are hired to perform the labour. In some of the larger centres, some villagers have established themselves as ‘porter brokers’, taking a commission for finding the labourers to meet the demand.

Forced labour fees are different from other fees demanded by the SPDC, most of which are little more than simple extortion. Forced labour fees collected by the SPDC are usually bribes paid by the whole village to exempt the village from having to go for a form of forced labour. Once the money is paid by one village, the SPDC officer then orders another village to do the labour. The other village will also probably pay money to get out of the work. This process is repeated from village to village until finally the labour has to be done and the SPDC will declare that no money can be paid for the work and the villagers must come to do it [refer to the **‘Fees, Looting, and Extortion’** section for further explanation of the other fees exacted from the villagers].

“When we are not free, we hire people. We hire our friends. If it is ‘loh ah pay’ [forced labour] for three days, it is about 3,000 or 4,000 Kyat. We can’t stay [in our village] without going. If we don’t go they will arrest us.” - “Saw Pa Aye” (M, 28), villager from xxxx village (Interview #43, 10/02)

“I had to go, but we asked and hired other people. We gave them money. They went instead of us. For me, I couldn’t go because I have a small child. We had to go even when it was raining.” - “Naw Maw Thee” (F, 20), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #55, 4/03)

Convict Labour

Successive Burmese regimes have long used convicts to supplement villagers as forced labour on infrastructure projects and as porters in major military offensives. In 1996, the SLORC/SPDC institutionalised the use of convict labour with the creation of the *Won Saung* internment camps. Translating in English as ‘carrying service’, the *Won Saung* camps serve as a halfway house to which prisoners are transferred from various prisons around the country to be readily available to frontline battalions for use as convict labourers. KHRG is presently aware of a total of six *Won Saung* camps located throughout Burma, all of which are positioned close to frontline areas. One of these camps is located at Thaton and two at Pa’an. From the *Won Saung*, the prisoners are sent out to the frontline battalions. The battalions then take them to carry supplies to their various camps and to perform labour around the camps. The labour performed at the camps is similar to that which the villagers are forced to do; cutting firewood, building fences, digging trenches, carrying water, and so on. Whenever the Army unit goes out on a patrol, the convicts are forced to carry their supplies and ammunition. Only men are taken as convict porters. Political prisoners and those who have lengthy prison terms still ahead of them are never sent as convict porters for fear that they are more likely to attempt to escape. It is usually those who have been arrested for lesser crimes, or often for no crime at all, who are sent as convict porters. In many cases, men have told KHRG that they were arrested without formal charges, sent straight to prison without trial, then almost immediately forwarded on to one of the *Won Saung* camps without ever having broken the law, apparently just to fill the Army’s demands for more forced labourers [For more on the issue of convict porters, see the previously published KHRG report looking specifically at the issue: **“Convict Porters: the Brutal Abuse of Prisoners on Burma’s Frontlines”** (KHRG #2000-06, December 20, 2000), in addition to **KHRG Photo Set 2005-A** (KHRG #2005-P1, May 27, 2005) which contains close to 50 photographs related directly to convict porters].

The use of convicts for forced labour has become so pervasive in Thaton District that villagers say they no longer have to go in large groups as operations (frontline) porters. They maintain that this task is reserved for the convicts. The use of convicts as porters is one tactic that the SPDC has employed to try to evade international condemnation for its use of forced labour, particularly by the International Labour Organization (ILO). ILO representatives have confirmed to KHRG that though ILO Convention 29

(which bans forced labour, and to which Burma is a party) allows the use of convict labour under certain circumstances, the ILO views the SPDC’s use of convicts for military purposes as forced labour and as violating the SPDC’s obligations under Convention 29. Furthermore, the use of convicts as porters in a combat environment, the brutal manner in which they are treated, the lack of medical care afforded to them, and the fact that they can be and often are used as human shields and human minesweepers not only violates the Geneva Conventions but is also in direct contravention of numerous other international humanitarian standards.

“There were about 60 soldiers and there were over 20 porters. They were all from xxxx village. There were also many tens of prisoners. ... There were many prisoners. We always had to follow the prisoners. We saw them last year and again earlier this year. We always carried loads together with them. ... Their clothes are green and their trousers are green [this is unlikely in that once prisoners are taken to be porters, their white prison uniforms are replaced with blue convict porter uniforms]. They always shaved their heads. We saw that they did many things to them. They kicked and stomped on the people who couldn’t carry. They killed many of them who couldn’t carry. I know that they recently did that to two prisoners. They said that they were sick and died. Maybe they couldn’t carry the loads because they were old. We went to bury one of them near their camp. They wrapped him [in a tarpaulin or some cloth] and then we buried him. We didn’t dare to open it because the Burmese also went.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

“[The] DKBA is using more forced labour. After Khin Nyunt’s declaration that they won’t use forced labour anymore [Order #1/99], the SPDC is better but they still use forced labour. [Though] it has gotten better since they started using convict porters.” - “Saw Hla Wah” (M, 40), Karen relief worker based in Thaton District (Interview #8, 1/04)

Convicts are treated brutally by the SPDC soldiers. They are generally forced to carry much heavier loads than villagers. Some loads are reported to weigh as much as 30 viss [50 kgs. / 108 lbs.]. They are fed badly, receiving an insufficient amount of food to sustain them. What little they are fed is of poor quality and is sometimes even rotten. They are typically fed low quality rice and a thin bean broth, both in small

portions. Almost no medical care is provided for sick convicts. The convicts slowly deteriorate and many become sick from the lack of food coupled with the heavy labour. Convicts who cannot keep up with the column or become too weak to continue to carry their loads are reviled, beaten, and kicked. Some become so ill that they simply cannot continue. The SPDC soldiers then either beat them to death where they lay or leave them there to die.

“The prisoners had to carry loads. Now they call the prisoners the most. They were there before I came [to the refugee camp]. They called a lot of them. They always took them. They hurt them a lot when they couldn’t walk. They killed them. I saw it this year. It was during the dry season. They couldn’t carry the loads and they were very thin. The prisoners were not strong enough to carry the loads like Karen people. ... I didn’t only see it once. Sometimes I saw them kill one prisoner and sometimes I saw them kill two prisoners. I saw them kill only one in the dry season [of 2002-2003]. I also saw it last year. I have seen it every year. It was since they started calling the prisoners. They killed them when they couldn’t walk. They left the prisoners who couldn’t walk when they were going on the path on the mountain and they died. If they didn’t kill them, they left them behind like that because they couldn’t walk anymore. They kicked and stomped on them when they couldn’t walk, but they still couldn’t walk.” - “Saw Lah Say” (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

“They are still forcing us. They force us, but they force the people in blue more. They are prisoners and there are many. They have made mistakes [committed crimes]. They force them to work a lot. They force them the whole day. They beat them like people beat cows and buffaloes. They

flee to escape. One day when they fled, they [SPDC soldiers] forced them to come back on four legs [walking bent over using both their hands and feet]. They hit them. They make them hurt a lot. They force them to work the whole day.” - “Saw Tha Sein” (M, 35), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #60, 6/03)

<p><u>Stamp:</u></p> <p>Frontline #xx Light Infantry Battalion Column #x</p> <p style="text-align: right;">To: 24-2-2004 Chairperson</p> <p style="text-align: center;">It is known that the village chairperson and some of the villagers have captured the convict servants who have fled from our army. The people who have fled are convicts who violated many kinds of criminal laws and can create many kinds of danger to the villages, so hand [them] over to our army units.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">[Sd.]</p>

Order #12: The SPDC now uses thousands of convicts as operations porters. The convicts are treated brutally. They are barely fed, regularly beaten, and may be killed when they are no longer able to carry their heavy loads. Many attempt to escape, and those who succeed in doing so are often taken in by the villagers. The villagers feed them, treat their wounds, and hand them over to KNLA units who try to help them go home or to Thailand. Those who are unsuccessful are either killed or brutally beaten. *[A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #12 in Appendix F.]*

issued to village leaders informing them that some convict porters had escaped and ordered the villagers to capture and return them to the unit. In the event that any of the convicts were captured and returned to the SPDC Army soldiers, they would most likely be severely beaten, possibly to death, in addition to having their prison terms extended indefinitely.

Many convict porters, fearing that they will be forced to porter loads for the Army until they die either from exhaustion, sickness, the beatings they are subjected to, or from stepping on a landmine realise that their only escape is to attempt to flee. Convict porters seen trying to escape are fired upon by the soldiers and those who are recaptured are severely beaten, sometimes to the point of death, and on occasion beyond it. KHRG has also obtained a number of written SPDC order documents

IV. Landmines

Landmines have not been laid in Thaton District in the numbers that they have been laid in some of the other Karen districts, but they still represent a very real danger for villagers in the area. Once laid, landmines still remain a threat many years later. All of the armed groups operating in Thaton District – the SPDC, DKBA, and KNLA – actively lay landmines in the area. None of these groups map the locations of their landmines. SPDC units regularly rotate in and out on average every three months, and though they probably pass general information to the incoming unit on mined locations it is highly unlikely that specific information is kept.

The KNLA tries to inform local villagers of mined areas, but the SPDC and the DKBA generally do not inform the villagers where they have planted their mines. Many mines have been planted in areas known to be frequented by civilians, yet they are not informed of the exact locations of the mines, or even of the existence of any mines in the area. Mines have been and continue to be planted in villagers' fields and plantations, on the paths that they use, and even in and around their villages. As a result, many villagers have been wounded, maimed, or killed while travelling on those paths, working in their fields, or while performing forced labour.

In Thaton District the SPDC confines the majority of its mine laying to the perimeter defence of their military camps, although they also plant them on paths that they believe that the KNLA uses. The DKBA however has laid large numbers of mines in the region. Their mines have been laid to block the paths that villagers use to travel, in villagers' fields and in places where it looks like people have been hiding. These places may be where the KNLA spent a night, but they may also be where villagers stopped to rest while travelling or while hunting. The notorious Moe Kyo of the DKBA has also planted mines in the forest and on the way to villagers' field huts, directly targeting civilians. The KNLA, short of money and ammunition, has used landmines as a way of protecting its hiding places and supply routes as well as for springing ambushes against SPDC and DKBA columns.

“They [SPDC] plant landmines in the jungle. They place their landmines in the jungle wherever there is a small path that they think that KNLA will use to travel. ... The DKBA mostly lays landmines in people's fields and on the paths.” - “Saw Ghaw

Wah” (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Interview #5, 11/04)

“The day after they came to take the things they laid two landmines. They laid one landmine in the villagers' hill fields, but they didn't let the villagers know. Finally one villager died. It was on September 30th 2001. The villager was hurt by the landmine in the hill field. The people called him Kaw La. He was a villager from La Kyo Koh. He was 22 years old.” - “Saw Myint Thu” (M, 36), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #18, 1/02)

“It happened at 7 o'clock in the morning [on June 6th 2001] at Kyo Neh Lu. I was going alone. I was injured by the Ta Baw Kay ['Yellow Cloth'; villager slang for the DKBA] landmine. It was Moe Kyo. There were about 20 or 30 people and they came with the Burmese. ... I didn't come back myself. The people carried me. The villagers and the KNU soldiers came to carry me here, to a Karen clinic. ... I am suffering because a landmine injured me and my leg was blown off. When my leg was blown off I saw nobody. I called the people from a distance. When I called the people in the hill fields heard and they came down. Auntie told me, 'I don't dare to go [to you]'. I told her, 'Auntie, please dare to come.' I told her, 'Come through the bushes [and not on the path]'. Auntie worried that if she came that way there would be another landmine. 'If there is another one, come through the bushes. If you come and stay near me, I will be satisfied when I die.' Then she was afraid that Moe Kyo was staying nearby. I told her, 'He isn't here.' She told me she was going to call the other people. I told her, 'Stay near me. Don't go to call the other people. The people will come.' Then she didn't go. She was holding me. My heart was strong when she was holding me. I worried that I would die, so if people stayed near me my heart was strong. ... I walk on my other leg with a crutch, it is not so gratifying. If I fix it [get a prosthesis] it would be a little better.” - “Naw Paw” (F, 21), widowed villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #17, 8/01); she was pregnant when she stepped on the mine and doing so caused her to miscarry

All of the armed groups in the region are capable of manufacturing their own landmines, albeit with varying degrees of complexity, sophistication, and

longevity. The SPDC manufactures its own mines in purpose-built factories. Known as the *Ka Pa Sa* factories (abbreviated from *Karkweye Pyitsu Setyoun* – the Burmese name for the Directorate of Defence Industries), these factories at Meiktila in Central Burma were built by the Chinese government in the early 1990s. These factories are known to produce at least two types of anti-personnel landmines: the MM-1 Stake Fragmentation Mine (SFM) and the MM-2 Blast Mine (BM), both of which have seen use in Thaton District. The MM-1 is a copy of the Chinese Type 58 Stake Fragmentation Mine, which in turn is a copy of the older Soviet PMOZ-2 mine. It is roughly the same size as a can of soft drink and may either be buried or mounted on a stake and rigged to a tripwire. Once activated, it explodes into 60 pieces, which are cast outwards in a 360 degree arc. The MM-2 is a copy of the Chinese Type 58 Blast Mine, itself a copy of the Soviet PMN mine. The MM-2 mine is buried and set off by the pressure of someone stepping on it. This is arguably the most prolifically laid landmine in Burma [refer to **KHRG Photo Set 2005-A** for examples of these mines]. Though the DKBA uses some factory-produced mines, which they acquire from the SPDC or through the Thai black market, many of its mines are homemade. In addition to producing their own mines, most of which are constructed from bamboo or blue PVC piping packed with explosives or gunpowder [examples of these may be seen in **KHRG Photo Set 2002-A**], KHRG researchers have stated that the DKBA has rigged 81mm and 60mm mortar shells as landmines. Most of the mines used by the KNLA are homemade Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) similar to those used by the DKBA. All groups also make and use their own variants of the American M-18 Claymore Directional Fragmentation Mine (DFM). Claymores are usually used in the perimeter defence of military camps as well as for springing ambushes [see **KHRG Photo Set 2005-A** for examples].

“They [SPDC] use the kind of landmines that when people step on them their legs are blown off. Most of the people who step on their landmines die. Some of them don’t die, but most of them die.” - “Saw Hla Wah” (M, 40), Karen relief worker based in Thaton District (Interview #8, 1/04)

“There are some people who are injured but who are not killed, but if they step on the round green mine [MM-2 Blast Mine], they usually die.” - “Saw Ghaw Wah” (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Interview #5, 11/04)

Unexploded ordnance (UXO) has not been a major problem in the district, although there have been a few isolated incidents of injuries stemming from UXO. KHRG researchers have heard of children being

injured after finding and playing with an unexploded 40mm grenade round from an M79 grenade launcher in 2000 or 2001. Fishermen have also been killed after using unexploded shells to catch fish. Sometimes old shells explode when villagers stumble upon them while cutting brush alongside the roads or ploughing their fields. Most UXOs are defective rocket propelled grenade (RPG) rounds, mortar shells, or rifle grenades. According to a KHRG researcher, some villagers erect fences around unexploded shells to cordon them off and act as a warning to others. Most villagers don’t dare to destroy them themselves and leave them alone. If there is a KNLA unit nearby, they may ask the KNLA to dispose of the shell.

“It happened two or three years ago [2000 or 2001]. One of the children went and took it. It was a #79 [M79 40mm grenade launcher] round. He took it and threw it and he got injured. He didn’t die.” - “Saw Hla Wah” (M, 40), Karen relief worker based in Thaton District (Interview #8, 1/04)

“There are some people who go and collect the shells that didn’t explode and they go and blow them up [in the river] to get fish. They tried to do it and they died. It was a long time ago. It was six or seven years ago. I haven’t heard of it recently.” - “Saw Hla Wah” (M, 40), Karen relief worker based in Thaton District (Interview #8, 1/04)

“Some people who know about it [UXO] make a fence and keep it inside the fence. Some of them burn it and some of them put it inside a fence. They don’t dare to destroy them. They don’t know how to destroy them so that they just keep them like that. They do not dare to touch them, because they have heard what has happened to other people.” - “Saw Ghaw Wah” (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Interview #5, 11/04)

Villagers who are wounded by landmines or UXO can expect little or no medical attention from the SPDC or the DKBA. They usually have to be carried to KNU medics or mobile Karen relief teams who attempt to take care of them with limited medicine and equipment, which usually amounts to little more than amputation of the affected limb without anaesthetic. Even to reach this limited medical help may take several days of being carried over rough terrain in a hammock slung from a bamboo pole. As a result, most landmine victims die from their injuries long before they can be carried to help.

As part of the **“Landmine Monitor Burma/Myanmar Annual Report 2004”⁶**, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) produced a special five year review looking at trends in the landmine problem in

Burma. According to the report, landmine use in Burma has seen a gradual but steady increase over that time. However, Thaton District is an exception to this trend. All sides have greatly reduced their use of landmines in Thaton District since the KNU and SPDC established an informal ceasefire in January 2004. KHRG researchers have reported that they have not heard of the SPDC or DKBA actively laying mines in the district, nor have they heard of anyone being injured or killed by landmines during 2004 or 2005. This is most likely related to the increased travel restrictions imposed on the villagers by both the SPDC and the DKBA over the same period [refer to the **'Restrictions'** section], because if the villagers are not permitted to travel outside their village, they are far less likely to be exposed to the threat of landmines in their fields or on the pathways leading to them.

"In the past there were people who were injured by landmines, but now [2004] I don't hear about that happening anymore." - "Saw Bah Heh" (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Interview #3, 1/04)

"I haven't heard that they have used them [landmines] when they have been patrolling this year, but in the past they did it every year. ... Even though there is a ceasefire they [DKBA] are always active. They don't go around and look for the KNLA; they go to stay in the villages. Now [2004] it seems as though they are even more active. ... The DKBA come and prohibit [the villagers] in our district and they are active even during the ceasefire. They come to the village and do not allow villagers to go outside and do not allow them to go to their fields. If they see them [villagers] in the forest they fine them and torture them. When they give orders like this, villagers dare not go to the forest or see their hill fields anymore." - "Saw Ghaw Wah" (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Interview #5, 11/04)



At 7:00 am on June 6th 2001, 21 year old Naw P—stepped on a DKBA landmine while walking to her hill field. The force of the blast blew off the lower portion of her right leg and wounded her left leg. She told KHRG that she now finds it difficult to work in her hill field and get enough food for her family. [Photo: KHRG]

V. Killings, Detention, and Torture

“Q: Why don’t you complain to them?”

A: Now they have issued the order or article called ‘Saught Myin Ka’ [‘Hate’]. They don’t have any questions. They don’t have to specify any faults if they want to arrest us. They release people when they want to release them. People haven’t made any mistakes, but still they arrest them. They release them whenever they want to release them. They also don’t release people forever. So we are afraid of them. Sometimes people go to carry paddy from the hill fields. If they [SPDC] see them, they torture and kill them. They accuse us of carrying rice for the Kawthoolei [slang for the KNU/KNLA], but really the villagers are carrying the food for themselves.” - “Saw Cho Aung” (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

Thaton District is under perhaps the strongest SPDC control of all seven Karen districts and should therefore theoretically be the district with the least conflict-related killing, torture, and arbitrary detention. Since the informal ceasefire began in January 2004 incidents of SPDC or DKBA troops shooting villagers have greatly decreased, yet villagers find they are still liable to be arrested, tortured, and summarily executed by both SPDC and DKBA military units. Some of the violence is random, but much of it is directed against village heads for not complying with the regular demands. The village heads are easier targets than the other villagers because they have to go to the Army camp when summoned by the officers and liaison with the soldiers whenever they come to the village, and because they are held responsible whenever demands are not met. The torture of village heads is often used by the SPDC to set an example to the other villagers of what could happen if their demands continue to be ignored. Thaton District has fewer internally displaced persons (IDPs) than other Karen districts because it is more difficult to evade SPDC control, and as a result the shooting of villagers on sight tends to be less common. However, arbitrary shootings still do occur. On August 1st 2005 a DKBA unit opened fire on a house in Bilin township, seriously wounding the four villagers inside, two of whom were children aged 6 and 12. Villagers are more often arrested, interrogated, and sometimes summarily executed, usually after being tortured as part of the interrogation first.

Villagers interviewed by KHRG have said that SPDC units have shot at villagers who ran away from them. The soldiers believe that anyone who flees from them must have done something wrong. In the mindset of the SPDC this means that anyone seen running away must be working with the KNU/KNLA. Villagers who have been shot by SPDC soldiers are almost never given medical attention, even when it is clear that the person is a villager and when the shooting has

been later admitted to have been an accident [see the **‘Education and Health’** section]. The attitude of many SPDC officers towards the villagers can clearly be summed up by the statement made by an officer after his soldiers accidentally shot and wounded a villager in Bilin township. He was quoted by a villager to have said, “*Let him die. It doesn’t matter. He is not our nationality*”.

“They shot Pa Eh Soe dead. They killed Pa Eh Soe two months ago. He was 28 years old. The Burmese shot him dead. Major Kyaw Za Lin’s unit [IB #14] shot him dead. They shot him dead when he jumped down from his house. The Burmese had come and slept there [in Paya Raw village] for three days. He had just come back from going to yyyy. The people told him not to come back. They [SPDC] had also arrested aaaa. We told him that aaaa stayed at zzzz so don’t come back, but he came and in the night the people [SPDC] came to arrest him. They called bbbb to show them. They tied up the owner of the house when bbbb went to show them. They also tied up the owner of the other house. They were both brothers in law. One is Cccc and the other is dddd. They are villagers in xxxx. It was because of Pa Eh Soe. They [SPDC] came to ask for him. Bbbb said that there was a radio at cccc’s house. Cccc said he didn’t know about it and that it was not in his house. At that time Pa Eh Soe was staying at dddd’s house. He jumped down to flee. When he jumped down the Burmese shot him dead.” - “Naw Bo Mu” (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #59, 6/03); also see the highlighted quote made by “U Maung Shwe” at the end of this section for more on the fate of Pa Eh Soe

“Now they shoot if people run. They issued an order. The bad people run and the good people stay. If people run, they are bad people and they shoot them dead. Villagers or bad people, if they see them run, they will shoot them.” - “Saw Ba Ray” (M, 26), teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #33, 3/02)



This villager from Bilin township lost his left arm after being shot by SPDC Army soldiers. [Photo: KHRG]

“He said he would go to his field. He heard the people shooting and then the people fled. He also followed those people. He didn’t run. When the Burmese called him he was walking slowly. He was shot dead in the people’s hill field. It was three days ago [May 14th 2001]. It was in the evening at the time when people are gathering their children and feeding their pigs. We heard him shouting. He called to me. The Burmese didn’t allow me to go. They shot at him three times, but only one time hurt him. It hurt him in the bladder. He didn’t die immediately. They [SPDC soldiers] looked after him with rice. They gave three sacks of rice and 10,000 Kyat. They gave it to hold a funeral because they shot him

wrongly.” - “Naw Lay Mo” (F, 60), widowed villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #11, 5/01); her husband and all of their nine children have all been killed or died from disease

“I want to hurt them [SPDC] back a lot. I said never mind, but I looked down at my younger brother and thought, ‘He is dead.’ My mother also went to see him. I told her, ‘Don’t worry. You don’t need to cry. His luck came like that.’ He had just left from being a monk. I have seven siblings, four are brothers. One is gone [to be a KNLA soldier]. The one who went isn’t dead yet, but the one who didn’t go is dead. The one who left was shot at many times by the Burmese near the house, but the one who didn’t go is dead, so we can’t do anything.” - “Saw Po Po” (M, 35), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #45, 11/02)

“They came to arrest me in the village. They said that the outside people [KNU] had entered the village. When they came to arrest the people they saw one buffalo run out and they believed that the Kawthoolei people had entered the village. They shot when the buffalo ran out and it hurt one of the villagers. He didn’t die. It injured his arm. The people told them when they shot him that they had injured a villager. They said, ‘Let him die. It doesn’t matter. He is not our nationality.’” - “Saw Play Loh” (M, 27), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #14, 6/01)

More commonly, villagers are arrested and killed by SPDC or DKBA soldiers on the accusation that they are helping the resistance. The evidence for this is usually very circumstantial and often little more than mere suspicion. Some villagers have been killed from the torture that always accompanies interrogation, while others have been summarily executed at the end of the interrogation. One villager thought he would be shown clemency if he complied with the SPDC by showing them where the KNLA had hidden a cache of landmines. However, this was considered evidence that he was aiding and abetting the resistance, and upon retrieving and relinquishing the six landmines to the soldiers, he was tortured and executed. Anyone who is known for a fact to be working with the KNU/KNLA is shown no leniency whatsoever. Wounded KNLA prisoners are horribly tortured before being killed. Villagers described to a KHRG researcher how an SPDC unit repeatedly stabbed a wounded KNLA soldier with a sharpened stick as he laid on the ground unarmed, defenceless, and bleeding after being shot in a firefight. The soldiers continued to stab, kick, and stomp on him until he died.

"They called everyone. They even went up into the houses and called everyone down. They also called the elderly people. They kicked them when they couldn't call them. There was an insane person named aaaa when they went to yyyy village. He didn't understand when they called him. He didn't care. They shot at him with guns. When they chased him they shot at his legs many times. He is an insane man." - "Saw Thaw Oo" (M, 28), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #31, 3/02)

"They looked and anyone that they suspected was tied up, punched and beaten. They did this to many people. Sometimes they were villagers. They tied them up and they had to follow for one or two nights. They also forced them to carry loads. They tied their hands behind them and forced them to carry a load. During the night they interrogated them, punched them and beat them. They were released later when the village head and their relatives followed and met the soldiers. The people who weren't released were killed. ... It happened last year [2002], but it hasn't happened yet this year. They killed one younger brother [a man younger than himself] from Lay Kay that way. The Burmese killed him and covered him with sawdust at the camp. They met him while he was ploughing." - "Saw Bo Ghay" (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

"Yes, they [DKBA] demand things. The villagers must give when they demand. If we didn't give things to them they said the sentiment of the people is with the Kawthoolei [slang for the KNU/KNLA]. When the people didn't feed them, they forced the people into the water and wrapped their heads [with a tarpaulin to temporarily suffocate them]. Some people who couldn't endure this died. ... I saw this. They wrapped the head of one person from Ta Meh Kee [earlier] this dry season. He died. They forced him into the water. He hadn't done anything wrong. He was a villager. They asked him, 'Did you see the Kawthoolei?' He said he hadn't seen them, but they didn't believe him, so they wrapped his head. After they wrapped his head they forced him into the water. He died when he could no longer breathe. He was Pa Beh Yu." - "Naw Maw Thee" (F, 20), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #55, 4/03)

"They killed our village tract secretary, Pa Mi Per. That unit already has gone back. They just went back last month [June 2003]. It was not long ago. They arrested one of our tract leaders and two villagers. One was going to the hill fields and

the other one was following our [village tract] secretary. They were tied up when they came back. There were three people. One of them had a walkie-talkie. They didn't kill them in our village. We told them, 'If you kill him, kill him in our village. Don't go to kill him in another village. He has his uncle, auntie and relatives and they want to see him.' He [an SPDC officer] told me, 'Mother, I won't kill him.' Win Htut Lin arrested him. They were from [LIB] #108, Division #44 [LID #66]. They only killed Pa Mi Per. He was 38 years old. He had just married and built a house. He had not stayed in his house for even one day yet. It was on the 8th day of the month [May 8th, 2003]. They killed him between Paya Raw and Lay Kay at the foot of the rock on the other side of the road. We went to find his grave. It was very far. ... He said that he [Pa Mi Per] was his enemy. They got one walkie-talkie. He [the SPDC officer] said he wouldn't kill him and would send him to the Division. He said he would send him to the Division, but he only arrived at Paya Raw. He didn't arrive at the Division." - "Daw Paw Ghay" (F, 50), village head from xxxx village (Interview #75, 7/03)

"Maung Kwee was a villager and he couldn't speak Burmese. When the SPDC arrested him and interrogated him he could only say 'Er' ['Yes']. The Burmese asked him, 'Do you have a gun? Did you plant landmines? Do you have landmines?' He said, 'Er.' He used this word as his answer. He went together with the SPDC and took out six landmines so the SPDC arrested him and tortured him. He was a villager, but as we are Karen people, they [KNU] need our help also. They ask us to keep their things. He thought that if he told the SPDC that, they would not torture him so much. Even though he said that, the SPDC didn't reduce the amount of torture and took more action against him. The SPDC later killed him." - U Maung Shwe" (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #67, 7/03)

"The people [KNLA] shot them near our village. They [SPDC] entered, but I didn't recognise their division or battalion numbers. The Battalion Commander's name was Aung Thu. Kawthoolei were staying on the other side of the mountain and came. We didn't know the time, but they met each other one time near the monastery. They [SPDC] shot a resistance person named Win Maung. After that, they called and gathered the village heads. 'Heads, what is the unit that entered just now?' The head said, 'The people who entered were aaaa's unit. Aaaa didn't know about your plan. Just now they entered and you entered and met each other. They didn't hide and

shoot at you.’ He said, ‘You must know the one who is dead now. Go and see.’ Then we went to see. After they had shot him, they stabbed him with a pole. They sliced off the top of a pole so it was sharp and then stabbed him before he had died. He was bruised on the places where they stabbed him. They stomped and stepped on him. They kicked and stomped on him. Very quickly we couldn’t remember him. Later they asked to find out about him. Afterward we found out he was Win Maung and someone we knew. He [SPDC] told his wife and children. His wife and children were staying at yyyy village. He said, ‘You married a soldier. You have to suffer like this. You are rude and you married a soldier.’” - “Naw Wah” (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #38, 3/02)

Most villagers who are arrested however are not killed. Instead they are interrogated and customarily tortured by the soldiers. Many of the villagers who have been arrested by the SPDC or DKBA have been accused of either supporting or of being actual members of the resistance. Others have been arrested and tortured in an attempt to gain intelligence about the whereabouts of the KNLA. On September 25th 2001, soldiers led by Moe Kyo of the DKBA demanded to know the location of a nearby KNLA encampment and supply cache. To extract this information the soldiers beat the village head with sticks and the butts of their rifles and threatened to cut his legs off if he refused to show them the location of the cache. Likewise, villagers are beaten and tortured every time that they fail to inform the SPDC of any intelligence on KNLA movements. It are usually the village heads who suffer this abuse [see the ‘Restrictions’ section].

“When I was staying at yyyy I was a village head. I was a village chairperson. The KNU soldiers sometimes come and go there. They [DKBA] told me to not give them information when they come and go and to not join hands with the KNU, so they called me down from the house and punched me a lot in front of the Burmese [soldiers]. All of my face became bruised. They called me down and punched me a lot, then they saw two boys who were working in the village and they tortured them. They punched and kicked them with big boots. Then they took them into the village and beat them with a length of bamboo three or four times each. ... After they tortured them they came back and said again, ‘A group of the Kawthoolei [slang for KNU/KNLA] came back to your village and you say you don’t know and hid them.’ So they fined us and forced us to give one pig from the village.” - “Saw Hla Than” (M, 37), villager from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #77, 4/01)

“When we were coming back from sawing firewood to make charcoal the Ko Per Baw [‘Yellow headbands’; villager slang for the DKBA] asked us, ‘Where are you going?’ We told them we were coming back from working our charcoal kiln. They asked, ‘Did you see the outside people?’ We said we hadn’t seen them. They said we were lying to them and forced us to smell the muzzle of a mortar and to breathe in strongly. They hit my nose [on the muzzle] and my nose was bleeding. Then they asked my small cousin and hit his head with a mortar base plate and his head was cut. When they questioned us we answered, ‘We don’t know why you are doing this. You are the Ko Per Baw and the children of Karen mothers. You are bigger than the Burmese.’” - “Saw Lay Loh” (M, 27), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #14, 6/01)

“They tortured me one time. It was when the people fled. They thought I was acting as sentry. I told them I wasn’t acting as sentry. Captain Soe Mya thought I was and accused me of acting as sentry. I told him I wasn’t and that it was the people who fled and not soldiers [KNLA]. He scolded and beat me. They punched and hit me. They kicked and stomped on me. They tied me up and pulled me along to the monastery. They hit me with a big shell [probably a mortar shell]. They poked me with a knife and a bayonet. They hit and punched my head. It caused an infection. I went to get an injection at yyyy. It cost 6,000 or 7,000 Kyat. It took over one month. I had to pay back the money once I was cured. I paid back the money little by little during the rainy season. I have not paid it completely yet. I still have 2,000 Kyat remaining to pay.” - “Saw Lay Mu” (M, 33), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #20, 1/02)

“They called the villagers down and gathered them. They ordered me to go and show them the KNU’s place. I told them I haven’t seen it. They disliked it when I told them I hadn’t seen it. Then they pushed me down and jabbed me with a gun. They beat my buttocks with a piece of wood. It was a piece of firewood 2 feet long. After he hit me one time, he hit me with his pistol. He ordered me to tell them the place. I told them I couldn’t tell them. They said, ‘You can’t [refuse]. If you can’t tell and you can’t go, we will cut your legs off with a machine.’ After he said that, they came in front of me with two guns. They were [DKBA officer] Moe Kyo’s soldiers. Moe Kyo was behind me. They told me, ‘If you don’t tell, we are going to kill you. Look at the tip of the barrel.’ I couldn’t do anything at that time. One of the Ko Per Baw [‘Yellow headbands’; villager slang for the DKBA]

soldiers told me, 'Speak. We have already written down your name. If you don't tell, you must die.' At that time we went to show them. We had to go to show them. When we went to show them, they seized their [KNU] things. ... They came on September 25th [2001] at 10 o'clock in the morning. It was only the Ko Per Baw who came on that day. There were about 35 soldiers. The one who commanded them was Moe Kyo." - "Saw Myint Thu" (M, 36), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #18, 1/02)

"When they ordered us we went and they beat us. They said that we gave the information a little bit wrong. We gave them information about the Nga Pway ['ring worm'; derogatory SPDC slang for the KNU]. They said, 'If the Nga Pway enter the village, say that they entered the village.' We told them that they came in the night. The villagers from yyyy said they entered at 3 p.m. and it was not night. We had to go and tell them, but we didn't go to tell them. We thought we would keep it and we would go and tell them the next morning. We thought it was no problem and we would tell them the next morning. We didn't tell the people who came to send the Kawthoolei soldiers. They said, 'We went to send the Kawthoolei soldiers to xxxx. Right now they are staying at xxxx.' At that time there were two Burmese units. One was staying at Peh Wa Hta and the other unit was staying at Paya Raw. ... They didn't order us to go, we went ourselves. At that time they didn't beat us yet. They were very happy because we came to send them the information. He said, 'Thank you for coming to tell us.' I told him, 'When they arrived in xxxx village, they didn't sleep in the village. They went out and I don't know where they were going.' The next morning the people from zzzz told them that they went to send them [KNLA] to xxxx the evening before and when they arrived back to zzzz it wasn't dark yet. It was 3 p.m. in the evening. Then they [SPDC] ordered us to go to yyyy. He said, 'We treat you as the Burmese village head, so why are you like this? You came to lie. I don't want to see you. You are the relative of the Nga Pway. When I see you I want to eat you. I will eat you.' But he didn't dare to eat us. He ordered us to come. He said, 'You are connected to the Nga Pway. They arrived at 3 p.m. in the evening, but you said they arrived in the night after dark. You came to tell us the next morning.' I said, 'Mother came back [to the village] at night. We saw them at night, so we told you in the night. In the daytime we are not staying in the village. We are going to work. We have to work to eat. We saw them in the night so we told you it was at night. We didn't dare to

come in the night, so we came the next morning.' Then he hit me five times with a very big piece of bamboo. It was as big around as a big toe and five plah [228.6 cms. / 7.5 feet] long. They beat me on my back. ... He said, 'Now we are not beating you. The Nga Pway are beating you. You feed the Nga Pway rice, so Nga Pway is beating you.'" - "Naw Wee Wee" (F, 42), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #48, 11/02)

"When they came during this dry season [January 2003], aaaa [a KNLA officer] came down and called a meeting at yyyy. Yyyy and xxxx are not very far. The Ko Per Thu ['Black Headbands'; villager slang for the KNLA] came back to call a meeting in the village. Many of the Ko Per Thu came to call the meeting. The military in Lay Kay said that the people didn't inform them. The Division Commander said that the village head hadn't informed him. He didn't dare to go and follow them because there were many of them waiting for them. He came after they had left. Then his soldiers went and beat them. I also went at them time, so I saw it with my own eyes. They were the Burmese unit from [LID] #44. All the female village heads ran away. It was during the cold season, maybe in the month of Pya Tho [January 2003]. ... They beat them. They even beat the women who have small babies. They beat many people. There were about five or six people. There were six people." - "Saw Lah Say" (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

"I had to be the one-month village head. The Burmese hit me. They beat me two times on my leg and it became purple. They ordered me. They said that the village head had lied to them. They said that the people [KNU] had come and spoken. They said that the village head had lied to them and didn't report to them. When they arrived they hit and beat [them]. All the chairpersons fled. They didn't dare to face them. They tied up the chairperson and shot at her. They beat her and fired a shot by her ear with a gun. They beat each one-month village head two times. It was during the month of Taw Tha Lin [September 2002]. They said that the people hadn't reported to them. The people had reported to them, but they didn't report everything. They said that the people had lied to them. They hit us when they arrived at the village. They demanded to eat poultry, goats and pigs." - "Naw Hla Win" (F, ?), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #58, 5/03)

“Maybe she didn’t inform them in Lay Kay when the people [KNU] held a meeting. Grandfather Operations Commander [KNLA] came back and held a meeting with the students here. She didn’t inform the Burmese about that, so when the Burmese found out, Burmese Captain Bo Myint came and hit her. The Burmese hit her back eight times, shot a gun beside her ear and tied her to a coconut tree.” - “Daw Mu Lu Wah” (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #65, 7/03)



This villager from Bilin township was portering for soldiers from LIB #2 when the unit was ambushed by the KNLA. The SPDC Army soldiers blamed him for the attack and tortured him in retaliation. They beat him with a rifle until it broke in two and suffocated him by wrapping his head in a soaked cloth. One of the officers then sliced open his thigh and calf with a knife. [Photo: KHRG]

Similarly, whenever a firefight has broken out between SPDC and KNLA units, it is usually the nearby villagers who are punished by the SPDC. Following a fight, the SPDC soldiers, unable and unwilling to pursue the KNLA, go to the nearest village to enact their retribution. The SPDC soldiers commonly arrest

the village head and/or several villagers and accuse them of having prior knowledge of the whereabouts of the KNLA and of complicity in or even responsibility for the attack. They are then beaten and tortured for failing to perform their duty by informing the SPDC. As one villager from Bilin township described to a KHRG researcher in 2003, *“They kicked, punched, and beat me. They said, ‘The Nga Pway [‘Ringworm’; SPDC slang for the KNLA] came to shoot us. You are united with the Nga Pway. Your feelings are the same as the Nga Pway.’ They beat me because we didn’t report to them [that the KNLA was nearby]. We didn’t know that the people would come to shoot them.”* Even if the villagers are aware of the presence of KNLA soldiers nearby, they have little or no influence over their activities. In most instances, villagers are not informed by the KNLA that they plan to ambush the SPDC, and even if they are, they can do little to stop it.

“They tortured people when the fighting I told you about occurred near the village. It was aaaa and one or two villagers from yyyy village. They had come to visit at that time. They [SPDC] did it to all of them. They tied them up. They kept the one or two villagers from yyyy on the bank of a ditch and stomped on their backs with their boots. Aaaa is a xxxx villager. They [SPDC] entered the village and took up a knife and were going to stab the village head with it. They also saw aaaa and they tied him and beat him. They hurt him a lot. They did his mouth here [indicating how he was cut] with a knife and it cut him a little. It was better for him after the people told them that he is a crazy man. ... He is not a crazy man.” - “Naw Kee Per” (F, 44), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #40, 8/02)

“We have to be afraid of the Burmese. We have to be afraid of them because they are torturing us. When they see us they beat and question us. They stabbed me. They stabbed me two or three months ago [September 17, 2002]. They saw me in the forest at Nya Doh Ni. When they saw us they called us and questioned us, ‘Did you hear anything?’ We told them that we hadn’t heard anything. Then a bomb exploded and they hit us. When they saw us they gave us baskets to carry. Then after we had gone halfway fighting occurred. After the fighting finished they hit us. They said, ‘When we asked you, you didn’t know. When we asked you about your Nga Pway [‘Ringworm’; SPDC slang for KNU/KNLA] relatives, you didn’t know. You came to take a rest. You came to contact the Kawthoolei.’ I told them, ‘No. There were fish. We were cooking rice and fish.’ They accused us that we had gone to contact the rebels. As for us, we stayed by

ourselves. At the same time that they asked me, they took a gun and beat me with the gun. The gun broke. The butt of the gun broke. The barrel was very long. They beat my back. They beat me one time. Then they asked me again, but I didn't answer them. They asked me who shot them. I told them that I didn't know. Then they soaked a wet towel and wrapped it around my nose. I couldn't breathe. Then after we went a while longer we sat and they questioned me again. Then they kicked my eyes. ... They went back to Yoh Kla camp. They stabbed me in the building at the gate of Yoh Kla camp. They stabbed me with a knife. That person didn't say anything to me. He drank alcohol and came to me. He stabbed me two times with a knife and then he got off his buttocks and went back. ... They didn't do anything else to me. After he stabbed me he left. Then the people [other soldiers] untied the rope on me. After they untied me they didn't listen to me. They didn't give me an injection or bandage my leg the whole night. He stabbed me once in the ankle and once in my thigh. It passed through my thigh. ... They [SPDC] gave me 5,000 Kyat and one sack of rice. I didn't take them. They asked me to take them, but I didn't want anything." - "U Day Thein" (M, 42), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #46, 11/02)

"The Burmese beat me. Fighting occurred so they beat us. They beat me at the beginning of the rainy season when the people start ploughing. They beat me because fighting occurred. The people [KNLA] shot at them. They beat me on the ground. They called me to the ground and then beat me. I was staying in my field hut. I had just stopped ploughing. I came back to the hut when I stopped ploughing. I came back and rolled a cheroot. After I finished three drags there was a gunshot. When the gun fired another group ran behind me. I didn't know where they came from. I thought they were Burmese. One person looked behind and another person looked at the ground. There were many, and then the explosions started. I didn't flee. I couldn't flee because I was between them. I went down [from his hut] when the fighting occurred. The people [KNLA] shot at the Saya Gyi ['big teacher'; used here to describe an SPDC Sergeant] but it didn't hit him. He aimed at me with a gun. ... When they shot at us I saw the bullets hitting. When the bullets stopped the Company Commander [SPDC] said, 'Why didn't you tell us?' I said, 'I didn't know. If I knew I would have told you.' He hit me once. The NCO with one or two chevrons [a Corporal or Lance Corporal] hit me. Many of them hit me. There were four people hitting me.

I couldn't hit them back. They didn't punch me at any time with their fists. They jabbed me with their barrels and their gun butts. They jabbed, 'chu, chu, chu' [imitating the sound of the jabs] and it was painful when they jabbed my back like that. ... They acted the same as if they had met a wild cat. None of them were soldiers [privates]. All of them were NCOs with two or three chevrons and Company Commander Kya Bay." - "Saw Ko Pi" (M, 32), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #49, 11/02)

"The new unit isn't hot-tempered. When they ask, we answer. We warned [informed] them, so they haven't been angry. We can't tell sometimes. If an event occurs in the village, we can't tell whether they will scold me or not. There was one time last year when the people [KNLA] shot near the village and I warned this Burmese unit. When the people shot near the village, I thought they [SPDC] would come and beat me to death. I came down alone when they called me. Nobody went with me in this emergency. I went alone. They didn't say anything so I was very happy. I had to go and sign a paper after I came back to sleep for 10 days. I went to Ler K'Ter. He [an SPDC officer] ordered me to find out who the people were who had shot at them. The people [KNU] asked me to say aaaa. I haven't seen them come again until now after I told him that." - "Naw Ber Kaw" (F, 52), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #39, 8/02)

"They never hurt me when I went to porter for them, but the people [KNLA] came and shot at them when I was building a house for those people [SPDC] and they beat me one time. They kicked, punched, and beat me. They said, 'The Nga Pway ['Ringworm'; SPDC slang for the KNLA] came to shoot us. You are united with the Nga Pway. Your feelings are the same as the Nga Pway.' They beat me because we didn't report to them [that the KNLA was nearby]. We didn't know that the people would come to shoot them. The one who tortured me was Khin Maung Myint. He punched, kicked and beat me. My head was cut with two or three wounds. He kicked both my sides and one or two of my ribs were broken. He beat me with a long piece of bamboo. My head was cut. You see, my teeth have fallen out. He beat me about 10 times and my back was in pain. There was blood on my head, shirt and sarong. I couldn't remember [he lost consciousness]. He questioned me and then I lost consciousness. They tied me up for one day and a night that time. He didn't give me food or water. I would have died if the village head hadn't come to guarantee for me. They tortured me at

the beginning of the rainy season one year ago. Until now I can't work." - "Saw Say Tee" (M, 48), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #57, 5/03)

DKBA and SPDC soldiers have also beaten villagers, particularly the village heads, for being unable to meet their demands. In many cases a village may face numerous demands from a number of different military units at the same time, and are only able to fulfil one of those orders at a time. Village heads try to explain to the soldiers why their demands could not be met, but this is often answered with a beating [also see the 'Forced Labour' section].

"They are the Ko Per Baw ['Yellow headbands'; villager slang for the DKBA] soldiers. They were angry with me because they couldn't demand bullock carts from us. They demanded 10 bullock carts. They were going to pull t'la aw [mahogany] logs. ... He is Bo Tin Win. He told me, 'Come and sit here.' I went there. I was carrying a bamboo hat and a pipe. He told me and a woman who came with me to carry rice to sit. She didn't dare to go. She knew Tin Win. He said, 'Auntie from xxxx, come here. What did you do? Only two bullock carts have arrived.' I said, 'I could only find two bullock carts.' He said, 'You are very clever to lie like this.' I said, 'I am not so clever as to lie. Elder sister [referring to herself] searched the whole night with the 'village mother / village father' [village elder]. The people told us they had to carry cut sugar cane. They were not free. When I went to ask at the other side of Baw Naw, they said they had to build a bridge.' He asked, 'Is it only your village that has to build the bridge?' I said, 'No, but the people aren't free to come. We could find only two bullock carts, so we only brought two bullock carts.' He said, 'Go see how many bullock carts are on sentry duty.' I said, 'I don't know. I don't remember how many bullock carts. I don't know. I will go back and ask the village mother and father. I don't know.' He said, 'Aren't you the chairperson? You are working for your people's place. You are clever.' I said, 'I am clever, but I am not clever in everything. I don't have food to eat. You can say whatever you want. I suffer a lot.' He kept me there for the whole evening. I said, 'Nephew, release me. Young brother, release me.' Some of them called me elder sister and some of them called me auntie. 'Release me. I will go back. This woman has a small baby.' They said, 'It doesn't matter. Young sister [addressing the other woman], didn't you buy bread for him?' She said, 'I didn't buy it. I don't have money. Release me. The people are waiting for us. If it is dark my baby won't get to suckle milk.' Then they

sent us in the night." - "Naw Ba Kee" (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

"We came back to xxxx by bullock cart. The children had started sleeping. We came back and he [DKBA] said, 'Gather the people and tell them that I order them to come and arrange bullock carts.' He was angry that they didn't get the bullock carts. He said, 'I am sending you to arrange the bullock carts.' He is the husband of one of the girls in xxxx. The people ordered him to come and arrange the bullock carts. 'The people sent only two bullock carts. Go find the eight remaining bullock carts. If you can't I won't release the village mother and father. Drive them together into the village. Do it for me. Gather them at the people's houses. Buy two bottles of alcohol.' It became dark. He talked on the radio, 'Bo Tin Win, I can't arrange the bullock carts yet. I can't find the village mother and father yet. I can only find the two 15-day village heads. Their shit and urine is dropping [they are afraid].' He [Bo Tin Win] said, 'Make them hurt a lot.' I said, 'Don't make us hurt a lot. Don't do to us like this. Your wife is also living in xxxx.' I told him, 'Pity us again. Release us. We are going back to find them again.' He said, 'You can't go back. If you go back you will tell. They [KNLA] will wait for me at the t'la aw [mahogany]. Don't go back. If I allow you to go back now, you are a cousin of aaaa [a KNLA soldier]. You will go back to call aaaa and you will ask him to come and wait for me on the way to yyyy.' He spoke to me like that. He called me to follow him because six of his friends [other DKBA soldiers] were waiting at the village. When I went back we got four bullock carts. When we arrived at Ta Thu Kee they shot their guns, 'raw raw' [imitating the sound of the guns]. He said, 'I am showing my ability to the xxxx villagers. Do you know that?' I said, 'You show your ability, but don't make too much noise with the guns. In the past you ate rice together with us.' ... He said, 'I can't rely on you. Every village respects me, but only xxxx doesn't respect me.'" - "Naw Ba Kee" (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

Torture usually involves some form of severe beating involving slaps, punches, kicks, being jabbed at with rifle barrels, and being beaten with rifle butts and sticks. Villagers are typically tied up during the beating and throughout any interrogation. The torture sometimes goes further, with villagers being sliced or stabbed with knives. Some villagers have had molten plastic dripped on their bare flesh. The soldiers set fire to plastic bags and hold them over the villagers so that the melted plastic drips onto them.

A common form of torture is to wrap the victim's head in a nylon tarpaulin and douse it with water. The water seals the pores in the fabric and the person begins to suffocate. The victim is then unable to breathe until the water runs off or dries up, opening the pores back up and thus allowing the person to breathe again. This is done repeatedly while the villager is being interrogated.

SPDC officers sometimes draw their pistols and threaten to shoot villagers. KHRG has been told by villagers of several different cases of SPDC officers drawing their pistols and attempting to shoot them, but their guns jammed when they pulled the trigger. This happened to "Saw La Htoo Mu" [Interview #27], a villager from Bilin township: *"Then he chambered a bullet. He pulled the trigger, but it didn't fire and he hit me. He hit me like this three times. Then he shot, but it didn't fire."* Others have told how officers fired their weapons into the ground next to them or next to the person's ear.

"They [DKBA] called me and two of my friends. My friends were aaaa and bbbb. They punched us, kicked us with big boots and covered our heads [with a soaked tarpaulin to suffocate them]. We couldn't endure it. I cried. Everybody cried. We couldn't endure it. They covered my head with a tarpaulin. They must have folded it two or three times because it was very big and thick. They punched me two times in the head and kicked my body two times with their boots. They ordered me to show them the Kawthoolei [slang for KNU/KNLA]. If I didn't show them I had to die. They tortured my friends the same. We couldn't show them because we didn't follow them [KNU/KNLA]. They asked, 'Did they come?' We said, 'They came.' They said, 'Which way did they go? Where did they sleep? You must have seen and know it. You are a village elder.' I said, 'I don't know because they didn't call us, they went themselves.' We then had to carry loads for two days [as forced labour]." - "Saw Nay Min" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #78, 4/01)

"Because of aaaa I suffered. He said that I was a soldier and I have been the servant of bbbb [a Karen officer] for one or two months already. On the night when the Burmese came to arrest me, aaaa himself was also with them. The Burmese asked me to talk with him. He said that I was Maung Aye. I told them I was not and that I am a villager named ["Saw Ghaw"]. Aaaa was a soldier [in the KNLA] and the Burmese captured him. I couldn't do anything. Aaaa only spoke two words to me and they pushed aaaa out and tied me up. It was painful and my arms were bruised. They

took me to Yoh Klah camp and interrogated me. They said that if they questioned me and I couldn't answer, they would ask my wife. They had also tied up my wife. Then they wrapped my head [with a piece of tarpaulin] two times. They told me to get a gun and a radio. I told them I didn't have them and I am a villager and not lying. They hit me with their gun butts. Then they stomped on me with their big boots. They choked my neck. I couldn't count the number of times they hit me." - "Saw Ghaw" (M, 30), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #12, 5/01)

"They beat me this time. They came at 8 o'clock. It was LIB #118, LID #44, Battalion Commander Aung Myint and Column #1 Deputy Commander Saw Hlaing Soe. They called me down [from his house]. Then we went. He said I was drunk when we went. Then he said, 'I will shoot you dead. You pray.' I said, 'I don't need to pray. Shoot until I'm dead.' Then he chambered a bullet. He pulled the trigger, but it didn't fire and he hit me. He hit me like this three times. Then he shot, but it didn't fire. Then he kicked like this [displaying the manner in which he was kicked]. When I fell down they went out into the middle of the village." - "Saw La Htoo Mu" (M, 58), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #27, 3/02)

"When the villagers fled they [SPDC] arrested and questioned the flat field owner [referring to himself]. They asked who was fleeing. I told them he was a villager. They also asked his name. I had to tell them his name. They asked, 'Why did he run? Is he a bad person?' I told them, 'He is not a bad person, he is a villager.' He [an SPDC officer] didn't believe me when I told him he was a villager. He asked, 'Why did he run? What does he do?' I told him, 'He doesn't do anything.' He said, 'He doesn't do anything, but he fled. If he doesn't work, he can't eat.' I said, 'He works a hill field.' He asked me what time he went to work. Then he punched me. He punched me three times in the chest, two times on my shoulder, two times on my neck and kicked my side one time." - "Saw Eh Doo" (M, 32), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #47, 11/02)

Some interrogations end with the villager being released immediately, while at other times the villager is taken away by the soldiers. Sometimes they are used as porters for several days and then released [also see the section on 'Forced Labour']. They are also sometimes taken back to the soldiers' camp and held there for several days or sometimes a month or more. During this time they are held in small cells or kept in mediaeval-style leg stocks. Many of the SPDC Army camps throughout the region contain a

set of these stocks. One villager claimed that he was subjected to this simply for arriving late for his stint of forced labour cutting the brush from alongside a road. They are fed very little and what little they are given is usually bad. "Saw Ter Kee" [Interview #88], a villager from Pa'an township, was arrested by the DKBA on the speculation that he was a KNLA soldier and detained in a cell along with about 50 or 60 others. They were fed rice that had cement powder mixed in with it. The soldiers forced them to eat it and would not allow anyone to wash out the cement. Another villager was not fed or given any water to drink for three days and was only fed then because one of the soldiers took pity on him and secretly brought him some food when his commanding officer wasn't looking. They are typically not allowed out of their cells to go to the toilet, and those who are locked in the stocks must soil themselves where they sit. The soldiers often continue to periodically interrogate and torture the detained villagers. The detention of villagers at military camps is practiced by both the SPDC and the DKBA. Villagers are usually only released when their village head can come to the camp to vouch for them and attempt to convince the soldiers that they are merely villagers and not soldiers. In many cases, a ransom must be paid before they are able to secure their release. The DKBA sometimes hands its prisoners over to the SPDC, who then sends them to prisons in towns in central Burma or Moulmein. DKBA and SPDC units also frequently work together to arrest and detain villagers.

"They hurt me many times. They put my two legs in the stocks [mediaeval-style leg stocks], pushed my body down and punched my chest. It was in this dry season during the month of Tha Tin Kyaut or Tan Saung Mon [October or November] 2003. They ordered me to go for 'loh ah pay', but I didn't go. They forced me to go and cut the bushes [flanking the road]. I went to cut them but I went late. They put me in the stocks at the camp. When one of the Thra Sit Kyu [Company Quartermaster Sergeant] came, he ordered me to lie down. He told me that I hadn't cared when they forced me, that I hadn't followed and done like the others. I told him, 'Saya Gyi [sergeant], I hadn't finished eating rice yet. I ate late.' He said, 'No you don't. You are a cunning man. We will put you in the stocks.' I thought he was lying to me, but he really put me in them. He didn't put my legs in them straight. He put my legs in spread apart. I kept my legs spread apart and I couldn't move. My legs felt very painful. He put me in there for an hour. He didn't do anything when he first put me in there. After a while he pushed my body and punched my chest. I couldn't move. He sat on my waist and punched my chest. I couldn't

breathe. He punched me three times. The elder came at that time and saw it. He said to him, 'Don't do that to him. He is a villager.'" - "Saw Bo Ghay" (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

"When I came back the soldiers of Pa Nwee and T'Gee Baw from the Ko Per Baw ['Yellow headbands'; villager slang for the DKBA] punched and beat me a lot. T'Gee Baw is a Battalion Commander. He beat and punched me. They tied me up the whole night. My legs were in the stocks. My hands stayed behind my back. It rained the whole night until morning. During the night I looked pale and was nearly dead. Another commander came and said, 'You are not receiving justice.' Then they released me and put me in a cell. I had to stay in a cell. I had to stay there for two months. They accused me of being a soldier. The Ko Per Baw accused me of being a Ko Per Lah ['Green headbands'; KNLA] soldier. They beat and punched me. When I was put in the cell they fed me rice mixed with cement powder. The Ko Per Baw fed me. They mixed it into the rice and didn't allow people to wash it out. They mixed that and chaff into the rice. ... I ate with the other people. One was aaaa. He lived in the back of yyyy. The people [DKBA] said that he was selling fake gold. There were many other people, about 50 or 60 people. They had different mistakes, like fighting or loving another man's wife. The people beat them and their heads were cut. They were put in cells. They killed two or three people the night I entered. They said they would kill one pig. I thought it was my turn. I found a rope and I put it on my neck, but I didn't die. ... The village head went to speak with them and they released me." - "Saw Ter Kee" (M, ?), refugee from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #88, 5/03)

Villagers are rarely given any medical assistance by the SPDC or the DKBA during their detention or after their release. Some villagers have been unable to work for days or weeks after being severely tortured. They must usually make do with traditional remedies made from leaves and roots found in the forest to heal their wounds. In an instance that occurred in January 2001, "Saw Dee Ghay" [Interview #10], was stabbed in the thigh during his interrogation. He was left tied up and blindfolded for the next three days, during which time he received no medical treatment for his wounds. It wasn't until three days after he was stabbed that he was untied (yet remained blindfolded) and he first became aware that his wound became infested with maggots. After a number of days, a medic finally cleaned and treated his wound. He was still unable to walk properly and complained

of still being in a great deal of pain two months after being tortured. It is quite possible that he also suffered some internal injuries as a result of the prolonged beatings that he received while being detained.

"The Burmese came to arrest me at midnight on the New Year. It was when the people had gone to the monastery and were coming back from worshipping that they came and arrested me. ... At first when they took me I didn't get rice to eat or water to drink. They put me in the stocks [mediaeval-style leg stocks] and also tied me. I passed urine and shat there. I couldn't go or come. I looked like a cow or a buffalo that passes urine or shits there and is very dirty. Nobody came near me. They just came to ask if I had a gun, but I didn't have a gun. They said, 'The people said you have a gun. When we come to ask, you say you don't have a gun, so the people have asked us to kill you.' I told them, 'If you will kill me, finish it because I don't have a gun. I have one 'tee law' [a type of homemade musket for hunting small game of no military value], I don't have another one. If you will kill me, finish it because I don't have a gun. I have only that one 'tee law'. You saw it.' They said that I have a gun and ordered me to find the gun. ... They tied my hands behind me. They tied one of my legs and put the other leg in the stocks. They also tied my neck. ... My leg that I am holding here, I can't walk well on it. They shot it one time. It is painful and I can't walk well. They shot me just one time. They mostly punched and hit my head. They beat me the whole day and night two or three times for two or three days. Later they decreased it a bit, but they didn't untie me. They didn't feed me rice for three days. They didn't feed me rice or water. On the third day they didn't see that one of their soldiers came to nudge me [awake] and feed me rice. But he fed me from outside the cell and I couldn't eat in the night time. Then he gave me water to drink. He told me, 'Eat quietly. Don't make noise. The commander will see. If any longer you will starve and die.' He fed me from outside the cell so it didn't go inside my mouth. ... I couldn't see when they beat me because my eyes were covered. I know only that they came and hit me with a gun butt. I also know that in the beginning they stabbed me with a knife. This is a scar from the knife and this also is a scar from the knife [displaying his wounds]. ... After three days they took me out of the stocks and they untied me, but they didn't uncover my head. I was untied so I touched my wound. The maggots were eating me, but because they didn't uncover my head I couldn't see. They covered my head all the time. They uncovered my face

after 15 days. ... They opened and treated my wounds that the maggots had eaten. In the beginning when they hadn't opened it yet, the maggots ate me and they didn't go near me. I told them I couldn't suffer it, but they didn't care about me. If I told them, they beat me. I didn't dare to speak. I told them flies and maggots were eating my legs and I couldn't endure it. When I spoke like that they kicked me. I didn't dare to speak so I had to suffer. ... I had to stay there for a month and they released me when their unit changed. If they hadn't changed their units I wouldn't have been released yet. ... I have been back [in his village] for about two months. My legs are numb and I can't stand up. My hands can't hold things. When I come back and sleep at night my cheek is painful. In the beginning when they beat me it was numb, I didn't feel the pain. Later, I knew that my cheek was painful at night. Inside is painful [he may have suffered internal injuries as a result of his beatings]." - "Saw Dee Ghay" (M, 50), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #10, 4/01)

"I remember that they entered on the 8th day of the waxing moon of Ta Gu [20/4/02]. When they entered [the village] they came up into my house. Then they woke me up. They forced me to go down. Then I went down. They called me to follow them to the other people's house and go up into the house. They went up into the other person's house and stole one bottle of alcohol and one chicken. They took me and tied me up in the night. They asked me about the place of the soldiers [KNLA]. I told them I hadn't seen it. Then he put a gun in my mouth and kicked me. He put the gun inside my mouth. They punched me one time and kicked the back of my neck one time. They tied me with a rope. They punched and kicked me after they tied me with the rope. The commander interrogated me himself. The commander was Zaw Hlaing Moe. They also called four other people. They were aaaa, bbbb, cccc and dddd. They asked for rope to tie dddd. He couldn't suffer so he fled and they shot at him. He wasn't injured. After they shot at him they came back and punched me. They asked me, 'Is he a soldier?' I said, 'No, he is a villager.' They said, 'He is a villager, then why did he run?' I said, 'He was afraid and fled. It is because what you are doing isn't right.' I wasn't free to speak. I was free to speak only one time, and then they put the gun in my mouth. They put the gun in my mouth and I wasn't able to breathe. ... In the morning they ordered us to hold their hats and fill them with rice. It was difficult. Maybe they didn't have rice also. They asked me, 'Do the Nga Pway have a paddy barn?' I said, 'I see

nothing.’ They asked me the names of the leaders. They asked me to tell them the names of the people who are soldiers. I said I didn’t know. He said, ‘You don’t know. Which village do you stay in?’ I said, ‘I stay in xxxx village.’ He said, ‘You stay in xxxx, so you must know how many people are soldiers.’ He argued and kicked me.” - “Saw Eh K’Lay” (M, 39), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #36, 4/02)

Though the interrogators usually accuse the villagers of being KNLA soldiers and ask about the activities of resistance forces, it is clear that they are often aware that their prisoner is innocent and knows very little – yet the torture and detention continues. In some cases the main purpose appears to be extracting ransom from the village, but more often the detentions, interrogations and torture have the main purpose of creating a climate of fear and subservience in the village. After SPDC or DKBA units have brutally tortured a villager for days and repeatedly decreed that he is a KNLA soldier, it would seem illogical for them to release him back to his village – yet this is what happens in most cases. This is probably to ensure that all the villagers in the area get the message that any failure to comply with orders and demands will be punished brutally. Thus detentions, interrogations and torture which appear on the surface to be aimed at extracting intelligence about enemy operations are actually carried out as part of the campaign to bring the civilian population under control and make them subservient to military orders and demands.

“Another thing is when they entered our village last year [in 2001] in Taw Tha Lin [Burmese month corresponding to October] and ate things. [DKBA officer] Moe Kyo came up at that time. They came to our village at 4 o’clock in the morning. The sun hadn’t risen yet. He called us down [from their houses]. We went down. We thought we would go to him. When we went down and went to the toilet, he said he would shoot all the villagers dead. He is Htee Kyu. He is a servant of Moe Kyo. At that time it was 4 o’clock in the morning and a rooster crowed. There was a rooster in my house. When he crowed, he [Htee Kyu] ordered his soldiers to go and catch it, but his soldiers didn’t dare to catch it. He said, ‘You must go and catch it as I say. You must go as I order.’ They caught the rooster after they called us down. They called us to gather on the other side of the river. There is a village there. After we were gathered, they took ropes and tied us. They tied us in groups of five people. They forced the five people to walk quickly. We couldn’t walk because they had tied five people with one rope. He said, ‘Walk quickly. If you don’t walk quickly,

I will shoot you dead.’ I was angry, so I replied, ‘If you want to shoot us dead, shoot me dead. We are villagers. We are not against you. You have tied us in a group and we can’t walk, so we tell you. We also can’t see because the sun hasn’t risen yet. You call us and we must go. Right now, if you want to shoot us dead, shoot us dead.’ They kept going after that. They went together with us. They handed us over to the Burmese when we arrived at yyyy. They handed us over to Intelligence. They called him ‘IO’ [Intelligence Officer]. His name was Maung Myint. He arrested all the villagers when he entered yyyy. After he arrested them, he questioned, beat, hit, choked their necks and wrapped their heads [with a soaked tarpaulin]. They sliced aaaa’s face with the skin of a coconut and poked him with a knife and he became blistered. They asked him about the place [where KNU was hiding]. When he told them that he didn’t know, they poked him with a knife. His whole body was bleeding. We didn’t dare to look. They tortured him cruelly in front of us. ... They asked about the KNU’s place. The father of one of them [yyyy villagers] wasn’t staying there. They asked him if his father was KNU. As you know, soldiers must travel. As for him, he didn’t know. He was young. He was 18 years old and he didn’t understand. They tied him with a rope and hit his head with a gun. His head was cut. ... It was the Burmese soldiers, but the Ko Per Baw [‘Yellow headbands’; villager slang for the DKBA] directed them to do it. The two of them were working together. When they [DKBA] directed them to do it, they had to do it. They said, ‘Make more pain for this person.’ So they did it.” - “Saw Myint Thu” (M, 36), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #18, 1/02)

“It was in the forest not far from the village. We were coming back on the path so we met them there. They called us in the night and told us to sit. When we sat they told us that we were cooperating with the Kawthoolei and we were going to get rice from the village. They threatened us and hit our heads. I didn’t dare to stay anymore. When they tied my two friends, they hadn’t tied me yet, so I fled. They shot me when I fled. They didn’t know that they had hurt me. If they knew they could have found me. One wound was in my thigh, one in my calf and one on the side of my calf. The people who shot me were Ko Per Baw [‘Yellow headbands’; villagers slang for the DKBA]. The one who led them was Thaw Ma Na. ... When I fled they accused me of working with Kawthoolei. They didn’t release my two friends. They took them along and took action against them and put them in prison. They

handed them both over to the Burmese. They haven't come back yet. They handed them over to the Burmese and the Burmese took them to the lower place. They put them in prison." - "Saw Htoo Shwe" (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #79, 8/01)

"They tortured three people including my uncle. When they tortured one of them they brought him back. He was sick for three months. He didn't dare to move. He was coughing blood. He couldn't move to pass stool or urine. He passed stool and urine at home. He ate there and slept there. That happened in Tha Tin Kyaut [October 2002]. He was still not healed when I came up here." - "Naw Maw Thee" (F, 20), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #55, 4/03)

Another way in which SPDC forces attempt to assert their dominance over the civilian population is through rape and sexual violence. While sexual abuse of women is not as frequent as detention with torture in Thaton District, it does happen and KHRG researchers have received several reports of it. Most of the abuse has come from SPDC soldiers, but sexual violence by DKBA soldiers has also been reported. Of all of the human rights violations being committed in Burma, there are none that carry the same stigma as rape. Many villagers view rape as the lowest of crimes to commit. The vast majority consider it to be worse than murder. Yet instead of receiving psychological and spiritual support from the community, women who have been raped often find themselves ostracised. Unmarried women who have been raped are considered by many as unfit for marriage, and married women, while finding moral support among other women in the village, are sometimes eschewed by their husbands who feel shamed by the rape. Villagers who have been violated have little recourse to justice. When it is reported to military commanders, some officers respond with promises to take action, but this seldom occurs and even these promises are accompanied by warnings to the women not to tell anyone else. More often, the officers deny the charges and threaten to punish the women for making false accusations and "spreading rumours". Most soldiers who dare to sexually assault women continue to enjoy impunity. Their crimes go unpunished and they remain free, if not emboldened to do it again. Luckily for those involved, all of the cases presented here were cases of attempted, but not actual rape. All of the women and girls were able to escape being violated; either managing to flee or with the assailant being interrupted before they could actually be raped.

On September 15th 2002, three DKBA soldiers attempted to rape and threatened to shoot "Naw Hsa Htoo" [Interview #81], a young Karen woman from Pa'an township as she washed in a stream. When she approached their commanding officer the following day, no action was taken. The officer refused to listen to any of her allegations, saying that the leader of the three was married and would not have done such a thing. The soldier being accused drew his pistol, chambered a round, and threatened to shoot her dead where she stood, providing further evidence that should have supported her case. The officer dismissed this simply by telling his soldier to put his pistol away and concluded by saying that there was no problem and that she should forgive the soldiers. On July 21st 2003, two young girls aged 10 and 12 were sexually assaulted by what the villagers believe to have been SPDC Army soldiers. At 4:00 a.m. the assailants crept into the room where the girls slept and cut away their underwear with a knife. Luckily for the girls the men were unable to proceed any further as some of the other villagers woke up and they fled. The girls themselves are unsure who came to them in the dark as they slept, and the villager who described the incident to KHRG was unsure if the offenders were soldiers or convict porters. However, it is highly unlikely that it were convict porters as they are usually tied up and guarded by soldiers at night, and therefore would not have had the freedom to have been able to get loose to assault the girls. Without any evidence, the villagers were unable to present the case to the SPDC commanding officers. They feared that they would have been labelled as troublemakers guilty of spreading rumours and would have been punished as a result.

"On May 19 2005, DKBA #333 Brigade, Battalion #3 platoon commander [usually a 2nd Lieutenant] Saw Maw Thaw [attempted to] rape 18 year old aaaa from yyyy village. She went to work in zzzz village, and at lunchtime on May 19 2005 while she was in the field, Saw Maw Thaw went to her with the intent of raping her. He pulled her to the ground and took off her clothes and [her] sarong. She tried to escape from being raped, but she couldn't. She was wearing underpants so it wasn't easy for him to have sex with her. At that time one of the children who was taking care of the cows came near so he let her go. She ran away and reported it to the village head. The village head then went to complain to his [DKBA] leader, but nothing happened. He didn't have time to strip her lower body, but he did have the time to strip her upper body. His leader didn't take any action against him. She was not paid any compensation for the insult to her dignity."

- "Saw Htoo Klay" (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Field Report #1, 5/05)

"The SPDC didn't rape, but the Ko Per Baw [Yellow headbands'; villager slang for the DKBA] did. They came with the SPDC. They did it. They did it to me. I suffered it. It happened on the 15th during the 9th month of 2002 [September 15th 2002]. It happened when I while I was taking my bath. I had gone down to take a bath after the school was finished. They asked to have sex with me. They took off my sarong. When I spoke and shouted at them, they beat me. They argued and pulled at my body. I didn't dare to stay and take a bath. They made me angry. Two or three of them asked to have sex with me and made me angry. They followed me when I ran and they took off my sarong. I shouted and cried when they took off my sarong. ... He didn't ask for my love; he asked to have sex with me. He spoke directly. There were three people. His other friends helped him and said, 'Follow and have sex'. He showed me his gun. He chambered a bullet. He chased me and took off my sarong. He asked to have sex with me. I ran and cried. He said he would shoot me. I pushed him away and then ran back and cried. He couldn't hold my lower body. I ran and he hit me. He punched my back. He punched me two or three times with his fist. Then I escaped and ran back to my house and cried. I went to complain to their commander after that. He said he would shoot and kill me. When the commander spoke to him he said that he was only joking. He has a wife. He is married and not single. His commander said there is no problem and to forgive him. He stayed on his soldier's side. He had already gone back to tell him [the commander] because I went to complain about him at daybreak. I didn't go at sunset [of the previous day]. When I went to complain, he stayed on his soldier's side and I couldn't say anything. ... Afterwards he didn't come to me, but he told me to be careful. He wasn't satisfied with me. He glared at me when I went to talk with his commander. He said that I had embellished. I said that I didn't embellish and that he did it to me like that. [He then drew his pistol and said that] he was going to shoot me. When he went to shoot me his commander said, 'Don't do like that.' He didn't shoot me. They were the same. He chambered a round when I went to speak to his commander. He remained very angry." - "Naw Hsa Htoo" (F, 18), teacher from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #81, 3/02)

"I was so afraid of one of the Burmese soldiers named Pa Daw Po [a nickname meaning a 'soldier's small dagger'] that I became sick and

developed a fever. I ran away to yyyy village. The people went to pick me up. He was going to slit my throat. He threatened me with a dagger. I was scared. He stabbed it near me. He said, 'Don't tell lies. Tell the truth.' I told him again and again. He interrogated me in the night. I thought he was going to rape me because it was after 11 o'clock and nearly midnight. He didn't call me to under the house. He called me very far. I went there without a light. I held a lighter and flicked it on. I had to wrap it in my sarong because it was hot. I told him, 'Major, you didn't bring a light. I can't see anything. I can't guess heads or tails.' He said, 'No problem. A light will come in a while.' A light did come after a while. He asked me to sit near him, but I didn't dare to sit there. It was dark and I didn't dare to sit near him. There were only Burmese [soldiers]. I was afraid of them. I was the only woman there. He asked me to sit near him in the dark. We [Karen] don't do this. I came back to sleep for a while after he interrogated me for a round. After I slept a while he called me to aaaa's sawmill. He interrogated me for another round. I couldn't sleep the whole night. In the morning I could only eat a little bit of rice. The people cooked good food, but I didn't want to eat. I was very afraid of this Burmese unit. This Burmese unit scolded me. The other Burmese units didn't scold me. They shouted at me and I shouted back at them, but I didn't dare to shout at him [Pa Daw Po]. If I had shouted at him a dagger would have reached my neck." - "Naw Ber Kaw" (F, 52), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #39, 8/02)

"They don't rape women, but there was a soldier or convict porter [probably a soldier since a convict would not have enough freedom to do this], we don't know which. They cut off a girl's short pants [underpants] with a knife. That girl is small. After they cut off that girl's pants, the people woke up and they fled. It was five days ago [July 21st 2003]. Her name is aaaa. They did it to her sister also. Her name is bbbb. They are very young and don't have breasts. Bbbb is 12 years old and her younger sister is 10 years old. They don't know who did that to them. It was the Burmese because we Karen people don't do that to each other. It was in the morning at 4:00 a.m. ... The people didn't complain to them [SPDC officers]. If we don't have evidence to show, we can't tell them because we are afraid that they will accuse us of spreading rumours. We dare to tell them only if we know the people who did that." - "Saw Zaw Kee" (F, 48), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #62, 7/03)

The Testimony of “U Maung Shwe”

“The [KNLA] officer, Pa [Eh] Soe, asked me to go with him to yyyy. He used to call me ‘Cousin “Shwe”’ and he told me, ‘Cousin “Shwe”, I have a debt with you because you make timber, so go with me and I will give you the money.’ I told him that if he was going to give me money, then I would go and I went with him. At first I said to him that I would sleep at zzzz, but he told me it is close to yyyy so we had better sleep at yyyy. We slept there because it would have been difficult to find each other and he said we could sleep there. The SPDC came up into the house and arrested us when we slept there. I was sleeping at aaaa’s house and they arrested Maung Kyi Aye and me. Officer Pa [Eh] Soe wasn’t sleeping together with us. He slept at bbbb’s house. They brought cccc to us and asked him, ‘Is Pa Eh Soe among these people?’ Cccc said there is no Pa Eh Soe, so he ordered his soldiers to find Pa Eh Soe. Then his soldiers went to bbbb’s house and found Pa Eh Soe. I think Pa Eh Soe was asleep at that time because after a while I heard a gunshot. When I heard a gun shot, two soldiers rushed to me and sat on my neck and another one pointed a gun at my back. The soldiers came back after the gunshot and said they had shot and killed Pa Eh Soe and it was really Pa Eh Soe.

“They began torturing me at once after they said that. They kicked me and I fell down. My head was hurt and I was dizzy. When I woke up [regained consciousness] I felt a sweet taste in my mouth and I saw that there was blood in my mouth. When I woke up they asked me where the gun was and I told them, ‘I don’t have a gun. I am a villager.’ They said, ‘You are not a villager. You are Pa Eh Soe’s soldier.’ Then they kicked my neck again and I fell down on my face. They picked me up and asked me again and I became dizzy. Then they asked where the gun was. I told them I didn’t have a gun. I didn’t have a gun and I couldn’t say that I had a gun also. Then they took cccc and told him that he must know the place because he was a villager there. They told him he must know where Pa Eh Soe kept his things and who he asked to keep his things. Cccc said, ‘I saw before that he kept rice in cccc’s house one time and people went to send it for him. Dddd had to send it.’ They found a walkie-talkie when they went up and searched for the things in cccc’s house. Then they asked me where Pa Eh Soe arrested me. I said that he arrested me on the riverside at the end of Thu Ka Bee village. They asked me, ‘Did he have a gun and a walkie-talkie when he arrested you?’ I told them he didn’t have anything with him. ‘When he met me I saw that he only had a machete. He asked me to go with him and I was afraid of him so I had to go with him.’ They asked me, ‘Did he hide his gun there?’ I said, ‘I don’t know, but when I saw him I didn’t see that he had anything with him. He asked me to come with him so I had to come with him. At first I thought I would go back, but it was late in the night so I couldn’t go back. If I had seen cows, I would have gone back again, but I didn’t see cows so I couldn’t go back. I thought I would sleep at Thu Ka Bee, but he saw me and took me to come with him, so I had to come with him.’

“They tied my arms in the back and also tied my upper arms and my neck and took me with them. When they arrived at the school they tied my legs also. They didn’t tie my legs together. They spread my legs and laid me down on my face and tied my legs. It was Saya Gyi [Sergeant] Thein Lwin. It wasn’t only Thein Lwin, many other lance corporals and corporals who had one or two chevrons tortured me a lot. Only Saya Gyi Soe Thein didn’t torture me. ... They took me with them and kept me in a cell. They tortured me when I was in the cell and they kicked me into the side with the wall. They tortured me in the cell and I saw a lot of my blood in the cell. They asked me for the gun, but I told them I didn’t have a gun and I hadn’t seen a gun. Later they jabbed me with a knife and stirred my mouth a lot [put a knife in his mouth and made a stirring motion with it, cutting up the inside of his mouth and tongue]. At that time my tongue was torn into many parts and I couldn’t eat rice. They sliced my ears and sliced my

neck. I still have the scar. They jabbed my chest with a knife many times until it just started bleeding and I couldn't suffer it. They kicked me with their knees so many times that I don't know how many times and I lost consciousness. Sometimes I was conscious and sometimes I lost consciousness.

"Many of them came to me and tortured me one by one. They sliced my ears twice each, but they didn't cut it away. They sliced my neck three or four times on both sides and grabbed my throat here and it was so painful that I couldn't drink water. It was very painful to me. They beat my back with a gun butt and now I felt pain in my back and I have chest pains also. They stabbed me with the knife and jabbed me with the gun butts and gun barrels. I don't know how many times they jabbed at me. I think it might be around 3,000 times because they tortured me seven or eight times in the night and tortured me ten or more times every day during the three days. I cannot do hard work, so I stay at home and take care of my children. My wife has to work in the field and cut to clear the bushes [perform forced labour]. If I am better, I will go to cut and clear the bushes.

"They thought they would take me to Lay Kay, but their officer knew me and some of the soldiers knew me so they thought they shouldn't kill me. My wife, my children and my family went and all the people in yyy knew me, so they came to guarantee [vouch] for me. They bribed the SPDC with food, dry fish and cigarettes. The villagers told the SPDC, 'He is a villager and he works in a sawmill and works a hill field. He doesn't do anything else.' Eeee is a relative of my wife, so my wife went to him because eeee can speak Burmese. So eeee went with her to guarantee for me. The yyy chairman and other people also went to guarantee for me. Some of the SPDC soldiers also knew me so they released me, but it was like they asked me to flee. Before they asked me to flee they took a small white and grey medicine. They put it in the water and shook it and bubbles rushed out and they drank it. I noticed they were drunk after they drank it. I think it might be dry alcohol. That medicine was whitish grey and a little long. They took three or four pills and powdered them and put them in a water bottle. They shook it and they drank it. I think they felt like they were drunk [it is possible that he is describing some sort of methamphetamine tablet such as the locally produced 'ya ba' ('crazy medicine')]. They came to me and they tied four of us together. They tied ffff, gggg, hhhh, iiii, cccc and myself. Then Saya Gyi Thein Win came to me and cut away the rope on my legs and I fell down. They pulled me far away and whistled to me and Saya Gyi Soe Thein and his soldiers came to me. He looked at his soldiers and said, 'Why are you coming here? What is your duty?' Then his soldiers went back away from him. Then he pulled me away again and told me, 'I know you are a villager, but the LID commander ordered me to kill you! I haven't gotten anything from you.' I told him, 'I am a villager so you didn't get anything.' He said, 'We haven't gotten anything from you and the commander ordered me to kill you, but I cannot kill you. Now run away.' He used his knife to cut off the rope his people had tied around my hands. I then walked away, but I couldn't walk well. When I passed away from him he shot a gun and I thought he had shot me. When I looked back at him he waved to me to walk away quickly I think. He shot at me about seven or eight times. Then I came home." - "U Maung Shwe" (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #67, 7/03)

VI. Fees, Looting, and Extortion

Many SPDC Army officers use their service in rural areas to make easy money which they can use to start businesses in urban areas. Company and battalion commanders can return from a six month to a year rotation in a rural area with a profit of several million Kyat. The officers make their money through the exploitation of villagers and their own soldiers as forced labour on money-making projects, 'deductions' from soldiers' salaries, selling of the soldiers' rations, collection of forced labour fees, collection of ransoms of arrested village heads and villagers, theft of the villagers' property, and extortion.

"They carried their own food, but they sold it. They sold their rations after they got them. They sold them when they arrived in the other villages. They are very clever. They demand a lot." - "Naw Ba Kee" (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

"They sell their own rice also. They sell milk and sugar. The demand the other food from us. They sold their dried fish and they forced me to sell their dried fish. They said they had 80 viss [128 kgs. / 288 lbs.] of dried fish, but when we weighed it, we saw that it was only 50 viss [80 kgs. / 180 lbs.]. They asked us to sell 1 viss [1.6 kgs. / 3.6 lbs.] of dried fish for 600 Kyat, so we had to sell 1 viss of dried fish for 600 Kyat. Their dried fish was no good, it was yellow and beaten. We didn't want to eat it, but we shared it among every house to buy it. I asked the villagers to buy it and I gave ½ viss of dried fish to each house to help me buy it. We got 30,600 Kyat and we sent it to them. We had to buy it. We couldn't refuse it, so everyone had to buy it. Whether we wanted to buy it or not, we had to buy it." - "Daw Mu Lu Wah" (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #65, 7/03)

"We already went yesterday [18/1/04] and we came back now. We had to go to sell milk for them. We had to get 300 Kyat for one milk tin. They sold it and used the money for cigars. I told them we are poor and have nothing. When we see our friends, we see that they also don't have anything. We are very poor. ... I tell them, 'You get a salary. You should feed us.'" - "Naw Than Sha" (F, 53), village head from xxxx village (Interview #71, 1/04)

Rice quotas were supposedly abolished by the SPDC in 2003, but all that really happened was that the SPDC simply changed the name and form from a quota to a tax. The SPDC now demands a portion of the crop as taxes on flat fields, hill fields and plantations. Such fees are still referred to as *ta won kyay*, or 'obligation'. According to a villager from Pa'an township, the SPDC demands the same amount from plantations as it does from fields; for each acre under cultivation, the villagers must give eight baskets [168 kgs. / 368 lbs.] of produce to the soldiers. In the case of flat rice fields, villagers are able to reap anything up to 70 baskets [1,470 kgs. / 3,220 lbs.] of paddy for each acre. Even when weather conditions are favourable, which has not been the case for the past few years, and when the villagers are free to access their fields (which also has not been the case for the past few years), this amounts to being, at best, more than ten percent of their entire harvest, and at worst much more. Villagers employed as fishermen must pay 7,000 Kyat per year for the privilege, while those who use traps to catch fish must pay 2,500 Kyat per month. The same rate applies to those catching freshwater shrimp (prawns). Villagers who want to travel along the roads must also pay taxes at the many checkpoints that dot the roads. Trucks carrying logs or bamboo for sale must pay 1,000 Kyat per truck at the checkpoints. The DKBA also levee taxes on goods and cows that are being taken for sale. These 'taxes' are arbitrary with the amount being demanded depending largely on the soldiers at the checkpoint. A KHRG researcher says that the amount of money and produce gained from these taxes is enough for the DKBA to live on.

"Everyone who has fields or plantations must pay ta won kyay ['obligation'; a quota on crops]. Fields and plantations are the same; they have to pay 8 baskets [168 kgs. / 368 lbs.] for one acre. One acre can yield 70 baskets [1,470 kgs. / 3,220 lbs.] of paddy. If the paddy is good it will yield 70 baskets." - "Saw Po Win" (M, 37), villager from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #83, 1/03)

"They collected porter fees and so many other fees that I didn't understand it. Sometimes they collected them three times in a month. They were 1,500 Kyat, 2,000 Kyat, and 3,000 Kyat. The villagers who used nets to catch fish had to pay 7,000 Kyat a year. The villagers who used traps to catch fish had to pay 2,500 Kyat per month."

They even collected 2,500 Kyat from the people hooking shrimp. They collected 5,000 Kyat for porter fees. Each house had to pay 5,000 Kyat per month. Many of the units are demanding this. It was [LIB] #206. [LIB] #206 demanded them from our village and [IB] #24 also demanded them from our village. .” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

“Yes, we had to go and work for the Ko Per Baw [‘Yellow headbands; villager slang for the DKBA]. Not many of them were staying there. There were only six or seven people staying there. They were collecting taxes at Lay Kay from the cars that are travelling. They were collecting taxes from the trucks that were carrying logs and bamboo. It was like they were staying at a checkpoint. They demanded 1,000 Kyat from each truck. The Burmese [Army] demanded 1,000 Kyat and they [DKBA] demanded 1,000 Kyat.” - “Saw Lah Say” (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

“They [DKBA] find money in many ways. They demand whatever taxes they want from the people who are trading goods and cows. They torture and hold tightly [detain] the people who can’t pay them. In the past they prohibited the people from going when the civilians went to buy and sell cows and buffaloes. They confiscated everything. Some people were in debt. If we look back, they collected taxes and then finally confiscated it all. The civilians couldn’t get anything and they are now in debt. They [the villagers] were fighting and arguing a lot.” - “Saw Kaw Thu” (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa’an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

SPDC and DKBA units that arrive at villages expect to be fed and either demand food from the village head or simply catch the villagers’ chickens or other livestock, kill them and eat them. When food is demanded, the village head has to ask a villager to give a chicken or pig and money is then collected from the other villagers to pay for it. When the villagers cannot pay for it, the village head has to pay out of his or her own pocket. The SPDC or DKBA soldiers usually do not pay any money to reimburse the villagers. When money is paid for rice or meat, it is usually far below the normal market price. When the soldiers kill the villagers’ livestock or steal their vegetables, the villagers are usually too afraid to say anything about it. In this case, nothing is ever paid and the villagers must simply stand by silently and watch it happen.

“Now they demand to eat rice, they buy it. Some people said that they [SPDC soldiers] have nothing. They have no rations, so they demand to eat for free. Sometimes they demand to eat two or three bowls [3.1-4.7 kgs. / 7-10.3 lbs.]. When they pay for it, they give 90 for one bowl [1.6 kgs. / 3.4 lbs.] of rice. The villagers pay 140 or 150 Kyat for one bowl because the price of rice is expensive.” - “Naw Hser Paw” (F, 43), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #24, 2/02)

“They don’t pay for the cost of the rice. They demand to eat it for free. They demand one basket [25 kgs. / 55 lbs.] or one big tin [12.5 kgs. / 27.6 lbs.] of rice when they come each time. They enter the village two or three times a month and I can’t collect it anymore. I also can’t give it to them anymore.” - “Daw Way” (F, 53), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #9, 3/01)

“They demanded to eat one chicken. They didn’t pay. It cost 1,500 Kyat. Our villagers paid for it. I told them [SPDC soldiers] it cost 1,500 Kyat, but they didn’t pay. He said, ‘You are feeding the Nga Pway [‘Ringworm’; SPDC slang for KNU/KNLA], so when we come you must feed us.’ I told them, ‘When the Nga Pway come, they bought it to eat themselves. When you come you don’t pay.’ He said, ‘Don’t talk so much.’” - “Naw Wee Wee” (F, 42), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #48, 11/02)

“They would demand rice from the people when they arrived in another village and feed them [the porters]. Sometimes when I saw the porters who came from xxxx, Noh Ka Thay or Noh Law Plaw they hadn’t fed them rice. They [SPDC] demanded rice to eat. They immediately demanded rice to eat when they entered my village. If they demanded one basket [25 kgs. / 55 lbs.], we had to give them one basket. If they demanded half a basket, we had to give half a basket. If they demanded one sack [50 kgs. / 110 lbs.], we had to give one sack.” - “Naw Ba Kee” (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

“When they come one time they demand to eat one or two chickens. When they come another time they demand to eat one pig. So my salary all disappears [she is not compensated]. Sometimes the person whose turn it is to be the one-month village head pities me and provides it. Sometimes I have to search for and buy it myself. Some people paid me and said, ‘You can do it for other people, so do it for me also. I will provide to you what the Burmese owe.’ [i.e. ‘give

the soldiers what they have demanded from me, and I will pay you back later'] Some people pity me. Some people don't have money. If they said 8,000 Kyat, it was 8,000 Kyat. I had to pay for the Burmese." - "Naw Ba Kee" (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

"None of the Karen [KNU] ask from me. They are all my younger brothers and sisters [meaning friends]. None of them ask for a bottle of alcohol and a chicken. They see my house, so none of them want to ask from me. The Karen side doesn't even want to ask for one betel chew from me. The Burmese ask to eat from me. Sometimes they order me to bring a bottle of coconut oil. One bottle is 500 Kyat. I had to buy it. Sometimes they order me to bring a chicken. Then I have to bring it. They demanded chickens for breeding once a month. They said they would go back to breed them and I would get good luck. I had to say that I would get good luck because I was afraid of them. Later I pretended that I am foolish and said to them [SPDC], 'The people [KNU] don't ask from me, but you ask from me very often.' Sometimes I told them, 'Son, I am very poor, but you want to ask from me. You never feed us a plate of rice when you come.'" - "Naw Ba Kee" (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

"We have to give them porters when they demand them. We have to find food for them when they demand to eat. It is as you know about them. They demand to eat rice when their rations are gone. We have to do it when they demand to eat rice. When they demand one big tin [of rice; 12.5 kgs / 27.6 lbs.], we have to give one big tin. When they demand 10 bowls [15.6 kgs. / 34.5 lbs.], we have to give 10 bowls. If they pay for the rice, they pay. If they don't pay for the rice, it is finished. The villagers pay 250 Kyat for one bowl [1.6 kgs. / 3.4 lbs.]. They pay 100 Kyat for one bowl, but we have to give it to them. The villagers are very poor, but we have to ask for it from them. Some villagers don't have it and when we ask for it from them in anger, they give it to us. We can't stay without giving it to them [meaning they may be forced out of the village]." - "Naw Ber Kaw" (F, 52), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #39, 8/02)

"When the Ko Per Baw ['Yellow headbands'; villager slang for the DKBA] entered xxxx, they went and told the village head that they would eat one pig, so the village head had to get one pig for them. They wanted 20 viss [32 kgs. / 72 lbs.] of pork so we had to find 20 viss or more than 20 viss. Later we had to collect the money

from the villagers. We had to collect 100 Kyat from each house and then go back and pay the owner of the pig." - "Saw Lah Say" (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

"They [SPDC] did not demand paddy and rice. They only demanded it sometimes when their rations were gone. They demanded one or two bowls [1.6-3.2 kgs. / 3.4-6.8 lbs.]." - "Saw Lah Say" (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

"He killed a person from Paya Raw. The people said that when they arrested a person from Paya Raw, they fed the soldiers pork and other types of meat. Win Htut Lin said, 'Come and feed me 10 viss [16 kgs. / 36 lbs.] of pork.' I said, 'Don't kill our people. We will feed you.' I told him that we couldn't find pork and that it was very expensive. We are in debt and we can't pay. He said, 'If that is so, feed us five roosters.' I gave him five roosters. ... He didn't pay. We have five sections and we collected one rooster from each section. We gave him five roosters. We sent the roosters to Kyo Wai because he stayed at Kyo Wai and ordered us to send them. He was going back." - "Daw Paw Ghay" (F, 50), village head from xxxx village (Interview #75, 7/03)

"When his [the LID #66 commander] column comes they demand to eat. As for him, he stays there [at Lay Kay] so we don't know him. In my village, when his columns come, they enter and eat. We don't dare to complain. It is because their Division Commander doesn't stay here. He stays in Lay Kay. If we go to complain to the Division Commander and then come back, they might come quietly to pull us away and kill me and it is finished. We are afraid of them. We villagers don't dare to go and complain." - "Saw Cho Aung" (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

"Sometimes when the Burmese come they demand to eat in the village. They demand three or four milk tins [585-780 kgs. / 1.3-1.7 lbs.] of rice from each person. They can't take it from the villagers who don't have rice. They take it from the villagers who have it." - "Saw Taw Lay" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #68, 11/03)

"When they don't have enough food, they demand food from the villagers. If they need five bowls [7.8 kgs. / 17.2 lbs.] of rice before they receive their salaries, they ask for it from the villagers. They demand to eat food from the

villagers when their company enters the village. We have to cook rice for the companies of IB #8 and #9 when they enter the village. The fifteen-day village head must cook the rice for them. They also demand to eat fish. They force us to buy it for them. They go back to Htee Nya Paw village after we cook. We have to cook rice for them whenever they come. They don't bring their own food. The villagers must always cook for them." - "Saw Kyaw Thu" (M, 40) village tract head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #69, 11/03)

SPDC units sometimes ransack villages stealing plates, pots, cups, spoons, sarongs, earrings, shirts, machetes, axes or whatever else they want or can get their hands on. SPDC soldiers have walked into shops and simply taken various goods such as packs of noodles, salt, cheroots, soda, monosodium glutamate (MSG), candy, peanuts, cigarette lighters and medicine without paying. This is usually done by the rank and file soldiers, although it seems as though it is at least with the tacit permission of their officers. The soldiers keep what they like and sell the rest, often forcing the villagers to buy the goods. Villagers who live near Army camps sometimes have their chickens and fruit stolen by SPDC soldiers, often at night. The soldiers are sometimes forced to do this because their officers have already sold off their rations. Villagers have told KHRG researchers that sometimes the soldiers come to them begging for food because they do not have any themselves. The looting of the villages further terrorises the villagers and keeps them too poor to adequately feed their families or meet the regular demands placed on them by all armed groups. Some villagers in the district have reported that since the ceasefire began there has been a decrease in the systematic looting of their villages, but it still occurs.

"They scolded us. They called down the children and old people and then ordered the whole village to follow them. We followed them to the Commander. They called and gathered us. Then they shot our poultry to eat them. They ate them as they liked. They also fined us to give pigs. Recently when Sergeant Major Maw T'Lone [a KNLA soldier] came to shoot, they fined us 200,000 Kyat. If pigs, they fined us one or two pigs of 10 or 20 viss [16-32 kgs. / 36-72 lbs.] in weight. After we objected about that we had to give them only one pig. Until now we haven't paid [the pig's owner] completely for the pig because some of the villagers have money and some don't. We can't completely pay for the pig yet. ... They said that we fed them [KNLA] rice. They said that if we didn't feed them rice, then they wouldn't stay here. They said that we breed

them." - "Naw Kee Per" (F, 44), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #40, 8/02)

"When they arrive, they shoot chickens to eat. They demand rice, sesame paste and chillies to eat. They demand to eat everything the people eat. When the owners aren't staying in a house they go up and take it themselves. ... They don't pay. When their commander demands, they say they will repay, but when we later go to collect it from them, they leave and are lost. This is when their commander demands things. The soldiers also demand with their hats, and they put things into their hats as though they were beggars. They beg for everything to eat." - "Naw Kee Per" (F, 44), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #40, 8/02)

"Their commander told them to buy things to eat, that when they can't buy they should ask for things to eat, and when they can't ask for things, stop. But their soldiers didn't stop. When they came they stole and ate the villagers' rice. They ate coconuts as they liked. They didn't buy them to eat. They even stole and ate the dogs. They stole and robbed to eat. When they couldn't demand things, they became angry. They stole things to eat in the night." - "Naw Wah" (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #38, 8/02)

"They came on August 2nd [2002] and left on August 12th. Their food was gone during these 10 days, so they lived and ate with the villagers. They demanded things to eat and stole things to eat. They ate 300 things from the villagers. They stole and ate 10 chickens, 3 baskets [75 kgs. / 165 lbs.] of rice and 3 dogs. When they demanded to eat the villagers fed them, but in the night they stole things to eat." - "Naw Wah" (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #38, 8/02)

"When they [SPDC soldiers] arrived near Paw Ghee Kee village they went to mill some coconut oil and it [a landmine] exploded. The people said that one of them with three chevrons [a sergeant] died. They stole things to eat and the women were praying they would stop, so they were hurt. The people [KNLA] were waiting and pulled a tripwire. One of the sergeants with three chevrons was dead. He stole a lot to eat. He robbed to eat. He was a vicious man." - "Naw Wah" (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #38, 8/02)

“When my siblings went [for forced labour as porters] they usually had to carry food. When they [the soldiers] entered any village they shot and ate the villagers’ poultry. They picked the villagers’ ash pumpkins and cucumbers and put everything in the [porters’] baskets. The villagers couldn’t carry them, but they had to carry them. The loads became heavier.” - “Saw Ni Maw” (M, 29), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #50, 3/03)

“They took vegetables, gourds, ash pumpkins and we weren’t able to eat them. Whenever they come they always eat. When they come they always pick ash pumpkins and young cucumbers. When they ordered me to find poultry, I had to find it. They ordered me to find one chicken of 5 rway [$\frac{1}{2}$ viss; 816 grams / 1.8 lbs.]. Right now you can’t find one chicken for 1,500 Kyat. We can’t even find one for 2,000 Kyat.” - “Naw Ba Kee” (F, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #84, 1/03)

“Yes, they robbed. They caught the villagers’ pigs and goats. They went into people’s houses and took everything like the good ‘nees’ and ‘tehkus’ [women’s and men’s sarongs]. It happened in T’Maw Daw and Pa Pwaw. In another village, Hsa Mu Per, they went into the houses and took things. They opened the villagers’ boxes and took their clothes. They took all the money they saw. It happened last year [2002], but I didn’t see it this year.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

“Yes, they took the good clothes. They took them last year [2002]. They took them for the prisoners. They took them and gave them to the prisoners who were friendly with them to wear. The prisoners [convict porters] were staying among them.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

“Recently when they entered they demanded to eat 10 chickens. They stole and ate three ducks. It was last month [May 2003].” - “U Mo Day” (M, 40), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #61, 6/03)

“If we look at it one way, they enter the village and they shot less of our poultry. During the past five or six years, they shot and ate poultry a lot when they entered the village.” - “Pa Hsa Ker” (M, 70), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #92, 5/04)

Villagers are also faced with almost constant demands for money from the soldiers in the form of ‘fees’ or ‘donations for development’. Both the SPDC and the DKBA ask for fees for sports competitions and religious festivals. One villager from Thaton township told KHRG how each household from his village was ordered to pay 500 Kyat whenever the SPDC hosted football and boxing matches. The money demanded from the villagers is often in excess of what is needed to hold the event, with the extra pocketed by the officers. Over the past couple of years the SPDC has begun numerous ‘development’ projects in Thaton District to build schools and clinics [see the **‘Education and Health’** section]. Large sums of money are demanded from the villagers to build the schools and clinics. In actual fact, little or none of the money being extorted from the villagers goes towards the construction, because the villagers are also ordered to provide all of the materials and do all of the work. In 2002, the SPDC ordered the construction of a new high school in Lay Kay village. A number of villages in the area were ordered to pay several hundred thousand Kyat towards the construction and support of the school, none of which was ever used for development of the school. In 2003, Colonel Aung Htun, the commanding officer of LID #66, demanded 100,000 Kyat from each village in Pa’an township. In 2003, Colonel Aung Htun was later promoted to Brigadier General and the position of Deputy Prime Minister.

“They always demanded money. We had to pay two or three days at a time. We always had to pay after they ate something. Sometimes we paid more than 1,000 Kyat and sometimes we paid more than 2,000 Kyat. Sometimes they demanded big amounts and sometimes they demanded small amounts.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

“They also collected money for food like chicken, goat and pig fees. We paid 7,000 Kyat or 8,000 Kyat per month. It was for chicken fees, pig fees, chilli fees, salt fees, cooking oil fees and onion fees. ... They held meetings and demanded money. We had to pay 1,500 Kyat or 700, 800 or 500 Kyat, 25 Kyat or 30 Kyat each time. I didn’t understand about all the things. We also had to pay when people played football. Each house had to pay 500 Kyat. They also collected it when the people were boxing in the village. They collected it when the higher leaders came to watch. Each house had to pay 500 Kyat.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

“When they say they will make an offering, they do it like this. They tell the village heads. Then the village heads collect 50 or 100 Kyat from each house. It is 4,000 or 5,000 Kyat each month. They don’t demand it regularly. Sometimes they demand about 10,000 Kyat. It is more than 4,000 or 5,000 Kyat. Sometimes they demand more and sometimes they demand less. That is for each house. ... I don’t know what they use it for. Now they are building a school. I don’t know how they are doing it. We don’t understand. When the people tell us to pay 100 Kyat, we pay 100 Kyat. When they demand 1,000 Kyat, we pay 1,000 Kyat. We can’t argue because everybody must pay.” - “Saw Lah Say” (M, 41), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #51, 3/03)

Another form of extortion is to demand fines from villagers whenever fighting occurs or landmines explode anywhere near their village. This form of extortion still occurs despite the ceasefire, because both the DKBA and the SPDC continue to fight the KNLA on occasion and landmines continue to be laid. The SPDC and the DKBA blame the villagers for any ambushes that take place, accusing them of knowing that it was going to happen and therefore failing their responsibility to inform them. In such cases, villagers are also often arrested, beaten, and tortured [see the ***‘Killings, Detention, and Torture’*** section]. Villages have been fined in cash, livestock, or food. In 2000, Moe Kyo of the DKBA demanded 10,000 Kyat from each household of a village in Bilin township following a firefight between KNLA and DKBA troops on the outskirts of the village. Also in Bilin township, a boat transporting rations destined for the SPDC Army camp at Lay Kay was ambushed by the KNLA and the rations were seized by the KNLA soldiers. The SPDC Army soldiers later went to one of the villages nearby and ordered the villagers to repay the cost of everything that was lost, even though some of the rations may originally have been extorted from other nearby villages.

“I didn’t pay porter fees. Sometimes we heard that their food and rations were lost. They said they had to buy more to replace them. They came and demanded them from the village. I don’t know what happened. The soldiers came on the way and the rations that they sent were lost. We don’t know whether they stole them and sold them. They said they were lost and we had to replace them by buying it for them. They said they couldn’t do it and that the villagers had to buy it for them.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

“They [SPDC] have said that if one of their commanders is lost [killed], the villagers have to pay compensation. If one gun is lost, they have to pay the cost. They take bases [the land for camps] from the villagers. As for us [KNU/KNLA] if we fight and act strongly, the blame will be put on the civilians. For this reason we have decreased our activities, because this is a very important thing.” - “Saw Kaw Thu” (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa’an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

“They haven’t burned the village, but the SPDC and the DKBA gathered and fought the KNU one time. They did it at the gate of the village and the end of the village. Then they fined each house to give 10,000 Kyat within the same day. The villagers who didn’t have money had to borrow it. They couldn’t repay it all after that, but they had to repay it. It was three years ago. The DKBA fined us. It was Moe Kyo. If we didn’t give it to them, they would have killed us and burned the village.” - “Saw Taw Lay” (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #68, 11/03)

“The people [KNLA] seized their rations, but they were not from xxxx village. The people seized their rations on a boat between Htee Si Baw and Khaw Poh Pleh villages. Xxxx village had to repay the rice. We had to pay the price.” - “Saw Cho Aung” (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

VII. Restrictions

In order for the SPDC to firmly stamp its control over the district it restricts the movements of the villagers in the area and forces village heads to provide intelligence reports on the movements of villagers and the resistance.

For the past few years there have been yearly movement restrictions on villagers in Thaton District. In September and October 2001 the DKBA confined villagers to their villages at the beginning of the rice harvest. Villagers were again prohibited from sleeping in their field huts at the beginning of the harvest season in 2002. The SPDC Army and the DKBA jointly prohibited villagers from leaving their villages in all four townships of the district in July 2003. In 2004 the DKBA again did not allow villagers in Bilin and Pa'an townships from going to their fields. 2005 has seen similar restrictions being placed on the villagers. Villagers were not allowed to sleep overnight in their field huts or to carry any packs of rice when they went to work in their fields. These movement restrictions are particularly difficult for the villagers to bear. If the villagers are not able to sleep in their field huts, they are unable to guard their crops against wild animals and birds that come to eat the grain as it ripens. Much of the crop is trampled as the animals forage in the fields. Some villagers also have fields located some distance from their village so the time taken to walk to their fields each day limits the amount of time they can actually spend working in their fields [see the **'Food Security'** section]. When the villagers are confined to their villages their crops are often partially or completely destroyed, resulting ultimately in many villagers going hungry because they were unable to acquire enough food.

"We have to be afraid of the Burmese. The Burmese said, 'Don't sleep in the forest [fields] now. We have many children [soldiers] and we can't tell all of them. If they see you, they will kill and torture you. Don't sleep in the forest. If you see us, don't run. Go quietly and come quietly'."
- "Naw Kay Lah" (F, 42), village head and teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #41, 8/02)

"I can't travel to work smoothly because the Burmese are patrolling. Sometimes when they come they say, 'Don't go.' We don't dare to go. Sometimes we meet them when we are going and they summon us back. They do not allow us to go. They will accuse us of contacting the Nga

Pway ['Ringworm'; SPDC slang for the KNU/KNLA]." - "Saw Pa Lah" (M, 24), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #44, 11/02)

"They prohibited us. When they came up they didn't allow people to travel. They forced us to stay in the village. They said to not go anywhere. They said, 'If we don't go, you also can't go. Go after we go out.' Sometimes they had already left the village, but they didn't allow us to go outside yet." - "Naw Maw Thee" (F, 20), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #55, 4/03)

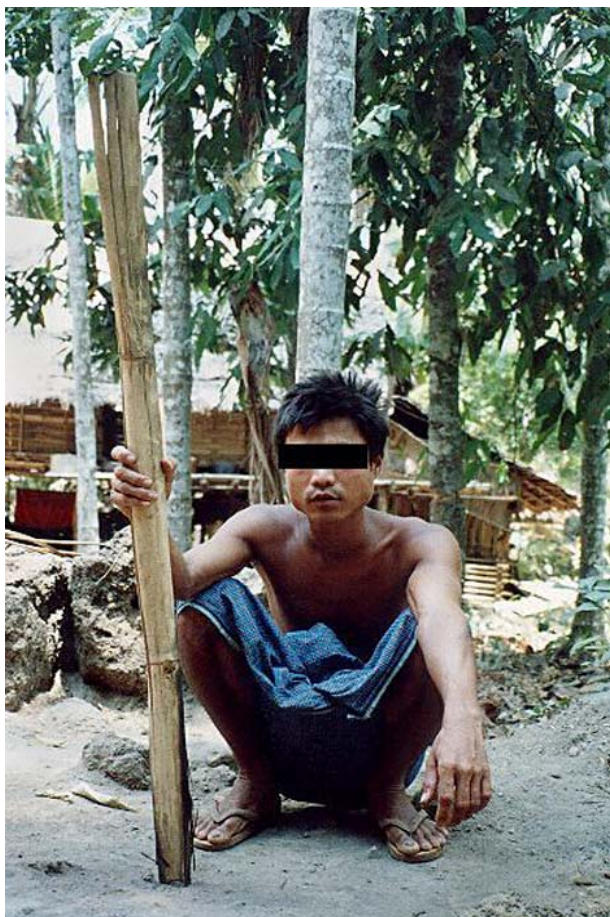
"KNU soldiers don't come and torture us, but don't you believe that the Burmese and the Ko Per Baw [DKBA] don't. When the Ko Per Baw came they restricted us. We couldn't go out [from the village]. We couldn't even take care of the cows outside. The cows were staying in the village, but what were they going to eat? They got nothing to eat. When they came last year in the month of Tawthalin [Burmese month corresponding to September/October] they restricted us." - "Naw Kee Per" (F, 44), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #40, 8/02)

"We can't work freely. We have to stay among the SPDC. We do not sleep at the field huts. Only the men dare to sleep there [in the fields] and they hide to sleep. If they [SPDC] see the people they will beat them. It is because they ordered us not to sleep there. The people do not dare to sleep there. We work and we are afraid. We have to work in fear. It is very hard. We go, go, go and come back in the evening. We have to come back early. If we don't work we can't get food to eat. We have to endure it ourselves." - "Naw Kee Per" (F, 44), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #40, 8/02)

"They [SPDC] said, 'Don't sleep in the hill fields. If we see you in the hill fields we will say you are the relatives of the Nga Pway. When we are coming to stay in the village, all of you come back to sleep in the village.' When they [SPDC] stay at yyyy and zzzz we have to sleep in the villages. They do not allow us to go." - "Naw Wee Wee" (F, 42), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #48, 11/02)

“We are working and fleeing. When the Burmese are patrolling we have to run. When the others run, we also have to run. Our people don’t go when they demand ‘loh ah pay’, so when people say to run, we must run. If our people went [for forced labour as ordered] we wouldn’t have this problem. We can’t go in the night like in the past. We go when there are no Burmese [soldiers]. We go to sleep at the field huts and watch for the pigs [wild pigs that eat the crop] at paddy [harvest] time. When the Burmese come close we don’t dare to go and sleep there.” - “Saw Ko Pi” (M, 32), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #49, 11/02)

When villagers are allowed to travel to their fields, there are often restrictions on how much rice they can carry, or sometimes even that they cannot carry any packs of rice at all. Villagers caught carrying



This villager from Bilin township was captured along with his friend by a combined column of SPDC and DKBA soldiers and questioned as to the whereabouts of a KNLA officer. The soldiers beat him with their rifles and the stick that he is shown here holding until it split. He was later released when the soldiers were satisfied that he didn’t know anything. [Photo: KHRG]

rice are accused of providing it to the resistance and can be arrested and tortured. Villagers must also typically get a travel pass from the village head when they travel outside the village [also see the **‘Food Security’** section]. These passes are usually stamped by the village head using a stamp given to him by the SPDC. The DKBA also issues passes. In October 2003, DKBA officer Lay Htoo ordered that male villagers between 15 and 60 years of age from at least 18 different villages in Bilin township would have to buy travel passes at the cost of 200 Kyat per pass. These travel passes must be presented whenever the villagers pass through a military checkpoint or camp or whenever they meet an SPDC or DKBA patrol. Villagers who are caught outside their villages without these passes would be accused of being members of the resistance and thus would be arrested and killed [also see the **‘Killings, Detention, and Torture’** section].

“The hill fields on the near side of the hill have to register. They [SPDC] ordered us to write down the number of people who are doing the hill fields or the flat fields. They wrote it when they were going to work and to keep away the [wild] pigs.” - “Saw Ko Pi” (M, 32), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #49, 11/02)

“They [DKBA] called men from every village. They had to write passes. They demanded 200 Kyat for one pass. ‘If we don’t see a pass, you must die. We will declare that you are KNU soldiers and are hardcore. We will kill anyone who doesn’t have a pass. If we see you in the jungle during that time, we will shoot you.’ During that time they didn’t allow the people to go to their hill fields and flat fields. During that time the civilians didn’t dare to go to their hill fields. Many of their hill fields were destroyed.” - “Saw Eh K’Thaw” (M, 55), Karen district official (Interview #7, 11/03)

“They [SPDC] gave us a council [Village Peace and Development Council] stamp. It is always in the village. We have to write passes for the villagers when they want to travel.” - “U Maung Lay” (M, 39), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #23, 2/02)

Many village heads must also send information to the nearby Army camp at least once a day. The SPDC insists that information be sent to them on any guests in the village, the arrival of any KNU/KNLA in the village, the movements of KNLA around the village and even the movements of the DKBA around the village. Village heads are supposed to keep guest registers where villagers have to write the name of any overnight guests in the village. SPDC officers

also sometimes request lists of monasteries and the number of monks, churches and the names of pastors, schools and numbers of teachers and students, and registers of all the families in the village containing the number of people in each household and their names and ages. These latter registers are used to check for strangers moving between villages around the region, and also as a basis for imposing forced labour and other demands based on village population.

“They asked for information about where they [KNU] were staying. They asked about the KNU soldiers. We had to go and give them information so they could avoid them [KNLA]. They didn’t want them to come to their camp. If they didn’t come to their camp, they didn’t have to go and follow them. They asked me, ‘Is there any unusual information?’ I said there was no unusual information. ... Sometimes when the village head tells us to go and tell, we go to tell. If he doesn’t tell, we don’t tell. If they hear it later, they demand one pig to eat. They don’t buy it. They fine us when we don’t tell them the information. They fine us if there are drivers or guests in the village and the village head doesn’t go and tell them. They demand a pig to eat.” - “Naw Tah Lay” (F, 26), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #25, 2/02)

“When the Division Commander came he told me that fighting should not occur in the village or outside the village. He said that if fighting occurred he would drive us out, and he has already found a place at the Lay Kay football field. He had finished measuring the area. He spoke like that. We thought we would try to keep our children [the KNLA] away as much as we could, because if they meet the Burmese we will be driven out. Now he doesn’t speak like that. He said that if the people come to the village, we should send information quickly. He will drive us out immediately if we don’t send it quickly. He said this on the 17th of last month [February 17th 2002].” - “Daw Kyaw Wah” (F, 47), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #29, 3/02)

“They [SPDC] called the village heads and gathered them. After they gathered them, they asked about the Nga Pway. ‘Does the Nga Pway come back or not?’ If we tell them they didn’t come back, our head makes a noise. They say, ‘Don’t you like us? The people told me that they came back one or two months ago.’ We can’t say about one or two months ago. We can’t say if they came one or two days ago.” - “Saw Kyi Nu”

<p align="center"><u>Stamp:</u></p> <p>Frontline #xx Light Infantry Battalion General Staff / Intelligence</p>		<p>Frontline #xx Light Infantry Battalion Naung K'Dote, Kya Ka Chaung area Letter No: 380 / Sa Ba Ya 0 Dtway 8 / Oo 1 Date: Year 2004, September 6th</p>
<p>To:</p> <p>Chairperson / Village Head _____ Village</p>		
<p>Subject: <u>Notifying [you] to report information to the yyyy Operations Commander</u></p>		
<p>Regarding the above subject, some new people were recruited from the elder's village by <i>tha ka tha</i> [insurgents], so bring the list of names of these youths and their photos, and come without fail to report to the Operations Commander at yyyy [Army] Camp on Monday September 6th, year 2004.</p>		
		<p><u>[Sd.]</u> (For) Battalion Commander Intelligence Officer</p>
<p><i>[In red ink:]</i> If [you] fail to send the information, it is the responsibility of the elder.</p>		

Order #13: This order is demanding that the village head provide the names of villagers who were suspected to have recently been recruited by the KNLA. Failing to do so will lead to problems with the SPDC, yet if he hands the names over he may then face problems with the KNLA. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #13 in Appendix F.]

(M, 28), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township
(Interview #30, 3/02)

Order #13 translated below was issued to a village head by SPDC military intelligence, demanding a list of names and the photos of people from his village who were recently recruited by the KNLA. This order presents a very difficult problem for the village head. If he complies with the order and supplies the list of names, he will endanger the lives of those on the list and possibly also their families still living in the village, and he might also be arrested by the KNU as an SPDC informer. Conversely, if he does not provide the list to the SPDC, he risks arrest by the SPDC as a KNU sympathiser. If he cannot negotiate his way around this order in some way, he may have little choice but to flee the village.

Restrictions are sometimes eased when a new SPDC officer rotates into the area every few months, only to be hardened again when a more hardline officer rotates in. Restrictions can therefore be erratic and are wholly dependent on the whims of various local officers, which can sometimes contradict each other. For example, starting in June 2003 villagers from Paya Raw village in Bilin township were allowed to begin catching frogs again at night and sleep in their field huts, which they had previously been forbidden to do. However, they are prohibited from using torches (flashlights) while hunting for frogs at night, because electric torches and batteries are considered rebel equipment. In SPDC-controlled areas where there is KNLA activity, villagers are only allowed to use firebrands or kerosene torches when going outside. Villagers in Thaton District are still prohibited from carrying batteries and medicine [see the **'Education and Health'** section]. Similar to the restrictions placed on carrying additional rice, the SPDC believes that the villagers will supply any medicine or batteries that they have to the resistance. The SPDC fears that the batteries will then be used in the construction of the KNLA's homemade landmines [see the **'Landmines'** section].

"They don't allow us to do things fully every year. Sometimes they allow us to use torches [flashlights], and sometimes they don't allow us to use them at all. Sometimes they say, 'Go catch frogs and feed me also.' Sometimes we go to catch them and sometimes we can't catch them at all. I have no idea about what they do. I am a village head, but I am confused." - "Saw Cho Aung"
(M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township
(Interview #64, 7/03)

VIII. Food Security

“They find food day by day. They can’t think about any longer than that. They are satisfied if they can find food to eat day by day.” - “Saw Hla Wah” (M, 40), Karen relief worker based in Thaton District (Interview #8, 1/04)

One of the most common complaints being related to KHRG field researchers by villagers in Thaton District is their inability to get enough food to feed their families. Most villagers in Thaton District live in old, well established villages that have been settled for many years. In Bilin township in the northern and northeastern portions of the district, many villagers practice hill field farming. In the flatter western portions of the district villagers tend flat fields and have plantations of fruit trees or other cash crops. Traditionally farmers have been able to harvest enough paddy to get them through to the harvest the following year. If there was not enough then they may have to eat rice gruel during the last month or two before the harvest. Many farmers also keep livestock and grow cash crops like fruits, chillies, betelnut, or betel leaves which they can sell or barter for more rice to see them through to the next harvest, while others will weave roofing thatch for the commercial markets. Thaton District has become known as a source of thatch to commercial markets outside the district. Life under the SPDC has produced tremendous strains on this subsistence agricultural system and many families are now not able to get enough rice to eat. A KHRG researcher from the area estimated in 2004 that only about 25% of villagers in Bilin township were able to get enough food. Many villagers are usually forced to eat nutritionally poor rice gruel known locally as *meh klaw* starting in October, but many more villagers are now having to resort to eating *meh klaw* or *baw k’paw* (rice porridge boiled with bamboo shoots) earlier in the year than they have had to do in the past in order to stretch their rice supplies further.

“They [villagers in his village] don’t get enough to eat. They buy food to eat. They do logging [to get money].” - “Saw Dee Kay” (M, 50), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #53, 3/03)

“We [the villagers] are working flat fields and hill fields. As for us [her family], we don’t have a flat field, so we are working a hill field. We get only four or five baskets [of paddy; 84-105 kgs. / 184-230 lbs.] in one year. My rice is gone now [the harvest will not be until November, three months away]. The villagers don’t get enough. Most of them don’t have enough. That is why the villagers

are very poor. The villagers have to go and carry rice from yyyy. They have to work poorly. That is why when the Burmese come to eat we [the village heads] are embarrassed to ask for rice from them [the villagers]. We can’t do anything because they oppress us.” - “Naw Ber Kaw” (F, 52), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #39, 8/02)

“Don’t believe that the villagers have enough food each year. There are only 10 people who have enough food. All of the villagers don’t have enough food. My village is very poor. I can tell you about this myself. Each villager comes to me and says, ‘Give me one bowl [1.6 kgs. / 3.4 lbs.] of rice. I don’t have rice to eat. If I work like this and I eat like this, I will die.’ They come to ask me for food. I said, ‘We can’t do it, but take one bowl.’ Another one comes, but I can’t give that many bowls. The people [SPDC] demanded five baskets [125 kgs. / 275 lbs.] of rice from us. I told them I couldn’t do it. We already used all that we had. I told the people to come and work at my place. My tears were falling down.” - “Daw Lay Wah” (F, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #54, 4/03)

“They trade food with each other. They work for daily wages. They work in the morning and eat in the evening. When they get a little money they go and buy rice.” - “Saw Taw Lay” (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #68, 11/03)

“Not everyone gets enough food to eat. In a few houses there is enough food. Some of them share rice. Now, many of them don’t have rice to cook. In the beginning they didn’t have anything. They work and eat. Then they work hill fields. They finished doing them and they ate until it was gone. They exchanged green paddy for rice. In the rainy season they work for daily wages and they can eat.” - “Saw Thaw Min” (M, 66), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #89, 5/04)

Villagers cite the heavy demands for forced labour as the main reason for not being able to get enough food. The time spent working for the SPDC or the DKBA is time that the villagers could be spending in their fields. Village heads often draw up rotating shifts to enable the villagers to have some time in their fields, but sometimes there are too many demands for labour and even with this system there is just not

allay the threat of starvation until they are able to produce or acquire their own food.

"In the beginning of the dry season when the paddy is ripe, the villagers have to harvest and dry it because otherwise the wild pigs will come to eat and destroy it, but the villagers don't have time to do it because they have to work for the

DKBA and SPDC soldiers. They have to cut firewood for them. In the beginning of the rainy season, they have to cut wood, bamboo, and thatch for them." - "Saw Htoo Klay" (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Field Report #2, 6/05); concerning Thaton and Bilin townships



A villager from Bilin township surveys the smouldering remains of what were his fields. Soldiers from LIB #118 swept through the area in March 2002 burning and destroying all fields and food supplies that they found. Many villagers lost what was most likely their only source of income. None of the villagers whose fields were burned were compensated for their loss. [Photo: KHRG]

"They found enough rice to get a milk tin [195 grams / 7 ozs.] or a cup. They hire themselves out and buy one milk tin or enough for one pot. They eat like this. They work and they get only enough for one or two pots. They don't earn a lot of money. They get it if they can cut a tree or bamboo. They get money only for a day. They have to endure it

enough time. The SPDC often demands that the villagers porter supplies to their outposts during harvest time in November, making it impossible for the villagers to be able to harvest all of their paddy before it is eaten by birds, wild animals, and insects. In order to make up for shortfalls in their rice supply many villagers hire themselves out as daily wage labourers. Villagers work in other villagers' fields seeding, transplanting rice seedlings, cutting the grass in the fields, and cutting bamboo and wood. The daily wages for this type of work usually amount to around 1,000 Kyat per day, or they may be paid in rice. Other villagers hire themselves out as manual labourers to carry produce to the markets. Villagers who have bullock carts hire themselves and their bullock carts out to carry things for other villagers. Villagers say that at this stage they are only able to get enough money to buy food for each day and that if they are unable to find work their families may go hungry that day. However, most villagers are able to borrow some rice from relatives or neighbours to help

like this. ... In my village one basket of paddy [21 kgs. / 46 lbs.] is 1,600 Kyat. One basket of rice [25 kgs. / 55 lbs.] is 5,500 Kyat." - "Saw Ni Maw" (M, 29), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #50, 3/03)

"They have to hire themselves out to collect betel leaves and vegetables. The people who have money grow betel leaves and hire other people. The people who are strong and can carry a lot get enough money for rice. As for me, your uncle [her husband] can't walk. He has paralysis. I have to do everything, but I can't do it. Two of my eldest children are females. It would be better if they were males." - "Naw Ber Kaw" (F, 52), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #39, 8/02)

"They don't have enough food, so they work when the people hire them. They carry goods by bullock carts. Sometimes people hire them to carry coconuts and jaggery. When they receive

money they eat poorly. The people who have enough food take care of the people who don't have enough. They are sharing food with each other. They are selling food to each other and then the people have to repay it the next year." - "Saw Kwee Tha" (M, 56), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #90, 5/04)

"They work for other people. They take food in advance and work for them. Some people hire themselves out day by day. People ask them to work seeding, pulling out rice seedlings for transplanting, cutting the grass in the fields and cutting bamboo and posts. Daily wages are 1,000 Kyat per day." - "Saw Hsa Shwe" (M, 46), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #72, 5/04)

"Some of them weave bamboo hats and sell them. Some of them weave bamboo baskets. Some of them dig out stumps. They go to get daily wages. They go to work for the other villagers, and then they buy food for their wives and children. Sometimes they go to work in the other villages for a month. When they come back they bring rice for their wives." - "U Lah Paw" (M, 40), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #91, 5/04)

Natural disasters have also had their role in the district. In recent years, flooding every year has destroyed many of the plantations and flat fields. Many villagers do not have any more seedlings to plant anyway. Flooding may also bring infestations of insects which can destroy much of what is left of the paddy, as happened in Bilin and Pa'an townships after floods in 2003. In 2004, many flat fields were flooded for too long resulting in yet another reduced harvest. In 2005, steady rains continued into mid-November, well over a month past the normal end of rainy season, preventing much of the crop from ripening properly and causing many of the rice grains to sprout while still on the stalk. Heavy rains can also cause landslides in the hills where the land has been cleared of trees for logging or to make way for hill fields. The heavy demands for forced labour make it difficult for villagers to find enough time to plant their fields again if they are destroyed due to flooding, drought, or landslides.

"The paddy was dead this year [2001]. It died because of flood water. Also because when we were working, the SPDC forced us to work. Everything is weak in the village. If this lasts for a long time we must flee up to Beh Klaw [a refugee camp in Thailand]." - "Daw Way" (F, 53), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #9, 3/01)

"They don't have enough food. None of the houses have enough. It is because of the earth. If there is a heavy rain, it floods. When there is no rain, we don't get any paddy. We don't have [irrigation] ditches to get water. We don't have forests because the villages are close. The villagers planted one or two baskets of paddy [seeds], but they only got 15 or 20 baskets of paddy. The villagers from our village have little knowledge. There is no one who has passed 10th Standard [Grade]. There is no one of high level among the monks. We can't build up the village. The villagers work, but there is no improvement." - "Pa Hsa Ker" (M, 70), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #92, 5/04)

"They called us to a meeting this week. They wrote a letter. The letter said, 'The place where you are living is a forested region and you are not doing the correct hill field system.' He said he would show us the right system. He built a mound as big as this [showing the size]. I looked at it and I wanted to laugh. He and his soldiers brought it from their army camp. It looked like a mound. Then he dug the earth step by step. It looked like when people build a pagoda. It was a terraced paddy field. He said, 'You are not doing the correct hill field system, so you don't get enough to eat. You do the hill fields and you also can't cut and clear your weeds.' We couldn't clear it, but they didn't see that it was because they are forcing us to work. We looked at it. He said on the top we have to block it with a line like this so that if it rains the water will stay." - "U Dah Lay" (M, 65), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #73, 5/04)

"Some of the paddy dies because of the weather: heavy rain or no rain or if the paddy gets infested with insects. Some of the villagers are not free to work for themselves because they have to go and work for the SPDC." - "Saw Bah Heh" (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Field Report #3, 6/05)

The DKBA and SPDC have placed almost yearly movement restrictions on the villagers. These restrictions are felt most heavily during the later part of the year when the villagers need to be in their fields to harvest the paddy and keep the animals away from eating it as the grains ripen. In 2004 the DKBA prohibited villagers in Bilin township, from Khaw Po Pleh village down to Pa'an township [see **Map 3 of Thaton District**], from leaving their villages and going to their fields. They let it be known that villagers caught outside their villages would be fined and tortured. The villagers did not dare to go to their fields anymore and much of the paddy was destroyed by birds and animals as a result. One KHRG researcher

estimated that villagers were only able to harvest about half of their paddy. Villagers often only stay in their field huts when they know SPDC units are far away. When SPDC units come to stay in their or nearby villages, the villagers go back to sleep in their own villages at night. They do not dare to stay in their field huts because the SPDC officers have told them that they would shoot people they see in their field huts.

"In the past we worked and we could eat. Since the Burmese have come to stay, a person can't get as much food as in the past. Now we do flat fields. The pigs come and eat the paddy. We go to watch for the pigs, but they [SPDC] do not allow us to go. When they do not allow us, we don't dare to go. When we don't dare to go, the pigs eat the paddy and destroy it. We work but we can't sleep at the field huts." - "Saw Eh K'Noh" (M, 57), refugee from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #85, 1/03)

"When the paddy was red and bright [ripe] they announced their prohibition, 'No one should go outside the village. If we see you, you will be shot dead.' No one dared to go, so the animals ate the people's paddy. They did it recently. It was after the people had finished doing the paddy, but the sugarcane and the sesame were left [to be harvested]. The rich people were doing sugarcane and sesame. When they prohibited it, the people didn't dare to go." - "Naw Hla Win" (F, ?), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #58, 5/03)

"Right now we can't tell yet. We are ploughing. The time hasn't arrived yet. Every year, sometimes we can sleep and sometimes we can't sleep. We are like this every year. Sometimes they say we can work and sleep [in the fields]. Sometimes the KNU comes and makes noise [shoots at the SPDC] and they say, 'Hey! No one can sleep at the field huts.' We stayed in the village, but we had to go and plough. Some flat fields are near and some are far. We have to go for one mile, over one mile or two miles. Sometimes we plead with them to be able to sleep there. Now they haven't spoken and we haven't asked them yet. It has started raining. We will ask them later when the time arrives and the people start transplanting the paddy whether the people can sleep in the huts or not." - "Saw Cho Aung" (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

"They don't get enough food. The reason is because they have to do many kinds of work. Now there is a unit of Burmese encamped here. The second thing is that they can't have enough time to go and stay [in the fields]. We can't go in the early morning when we can only see our feet. They specified that we can go at 8 o'clock in the morning. We must come back at 4 o'clock in the evening. It is not easy for our villagers to work. They do not allow us to sleep in the field huts. They said that they would shoot us dead if they saw us in the field huts. We villagers are afraid and we don't dare to travel. Another thing is that the pigs and insects ate it. We don't go in the night. When we go in the daytime, they [the animals] don't come." - "Saw Taw Lay" (M, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #68, 11/03)

"They restricted us when the villagers were harvesting. They entered the village and gathered the villagers. Then they told the villagers, 'No one should go outside tomorrow.' So the villagers didn't dare to go out. The remaining paddy was destroyed. The cows, buffaloes, pigs and chickens ate it. Some of it was destroyed and some of it remained so we harvested it, but it wasn't enough to eat." - "Saw Ni Maw" (M, 29), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #50, 3/03)

Many villagers must buy additional rice with money raised from working as day labourers or from growing cash crops. However, before a villager is permitted to leave his or her village in order to buy rice from markets in nearby villages, they must first get permission from the SPDC. The SPDC demands that the villagers go and see them first, and questions them before approval is granted and a pass is issued. During the interrogation, the villagers are asked how many people are living in their household. This number is written down on the pass, permitting the villagers to buy just enough rice for these people and no others. The pass is checked by SPDC soldiers every time the villager encounters a military checkpoint, camp, or patrol on their return journey. If they are caught carrying more rice than they are allowed to, it is confiscated and eaten by the soldiers and they will likely be arrested and tortured. The SPDC fears that any surplus rice that the villagers have will be supplied to resistance forces, so they restrict the amount of rice that the villagers are allowed to purchase at any one time to the bare minimum. The somewhat obvious fact that most villagers do not have enough food to even feed their families, let alone give it to the KNU, seems lost on the SPDC. This paltry ration is never enough for the villagers to stave off the all too familiar hunger that

many of them must now face. Many villagers now teeter on the brink of starvation and malnutrition rates, particularly amongst children, are alarmingly high [also see the **'Education and Health'** section]. In October 2003 the Burmese Border Consortium (a Thailand-based aid organisation), in conjunction with numerous grassroots organisations working along the Burma-Thai border, released the report entitled: **"Reclaiming the Right to Rice"**. This report looked at the issue of food security and internal displacement in Eastern Burma. As part of the report, the findings of a survey conducted by the Backpack Health Workers Team (BPHWT) were published to illustrate the nutritional impact of internal displacement. The survey found that in all areas where the survey was conducted, with parts of Thaton District being among them, child malnutrition rates were as high as 11.4%. To put this figure into perspective the report pointed out that, *"the World Health Organisation states that acute malnutrition greater than 10% of the target population indicates a serious problem"*. Food insecurity and a poor dietary intake, with as many as 26% of the children surveyed having not eaten any protein-rich foods in the week prior to the survey were identified as the source of such high rates of malnutrition.

"They said we have to go and get a pass from them if we want to go and buy rice. When we go to get the pass they ask us how many people are in our house. He will only give it for them and he will confiscate the rest [only allow them to purchase a sufficient amount of rice for the number of people in the household]. They said we would go to feed the KNU soldiers. I told them, 'I can't buy enough rice to eat because I don't have money to buy rice. I have to work and find it. If I go to buy it, I have to carry it on your truck and I don't have money for the truck fees.' They pitied me. As I spoke I cried. They gave me five bowls of rice." - "Daw Lah Zin" (F, 48), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #28, 3/02)

Some villagers also grow small gardens of cash crops which they sell to be able to buy more rice. These crops include betelnut, betel leaves, chillies, taro, dogfruit, sesame, sugarcane, and soybeans. Sometimes people come up from the towns to buy the produce and other times the villagers have to go down to the towns to sell it. Those who are unable to get permission to travel must either risk the journey without the permission of the SPDC or settle for selling their produce within their own village, where prices are considerably lower. One basket [25 kgs. / 55 lbs.] of soybeans is worth 4,000 Kyat and a basket [25 kgs. / 55 lbs.] of sesame is 9,000 Kyat. Some villagers near rivers are able to earn extra money by

fishing, catching freshwater shrimp (prawns) or frogs which they then sell. One viss [1.6 kgs. / 3.6 lbs.] of fish fetches 800 to 1,000 Kyat. Other villagers cut firewood or bamboo, or weave roofing thatch to sell. Villagers state that they are able to stack up to 500 shingles of thatch onto a bullock cart which they then drive to market, where during the rainy season they are likely to receive only as little as 4,000 Kyat for it, or they can sell firewood for 10 to 20 Kyat per bundle.



In April 2003, soldiers from IB #11 burned all of the hill fields along the Kyaik Khaw – Ka Dtaing Dtee car road between Yoh Klah and Kaw Po Koh villages. In all, 11 hill fields were destroyed. This 50 year old woman was one of the villagers who lost her livelihood. She told KHRG that she was not sure how she would get enough food to survive. [Photo: KHRG]

"We climb to get betel leaves. The price of betel leaves is good. People say that we are rich. I say we are not rich. We don't have any elephants. Rich people don't have to climb trees. We don't have money to buy rice and the people call us rich. We like to listen to that. We have to climb to get betel leaves to buy rice to eat. We go to buy it from yyyyand zzzz. We ask for it from the people in zzzz. The people in zzzz go to get it

from www. We take the whole sack. One sack [50 kgs. / 110 lbs.] is 6,000 Kyat." - "Naw Khu Kyi" (F, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #42, 8/02)

"The villagers among the mountains are very poor. They don't have an income. They are working hill fields. After they do it, they eat and it is all gone. The next year they have to do it again. Most of them are selling some betel leaves to get money to buy salt and fishpaste. They climb trees to get dogfruit. If the dogfruit don't come out, they are poor. They can't send their children to school. They can't take any precautions for their health." - "Saw Eh K'Thaw" (M, 55), Karen district official (Interview #7, 11/03)

"We work a hill field. We get 10 baskets of paddy, but not every time. Some years we only get five baskets of paddy. It is not enough for us to eat. We then cut bamboo and sell it. For one day we can get 50 pieces of bamboo. We sell it in yyyy and Bilin. When we can't cut bamboo, we sell thatch. In the dry season we gather thatch. We cut it for three days and we get one bullock cart load of it. One bullock cart can carry 500 shingles. When we sell it in the rainy season, we receive only 4,000 Kyat. We sell it in our village." - "Naw Tah Tah" (F, 24), villager from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #99, 11/03)

"Sometimes we get 40 or 50 baskets of paddy. It is not enough for us, so we have to barter [for food]. We climb the trees to get betelnut and betel leaves. We get 1,000 or 2,000 Kyat. One viss of betel leaves is 300 Kyat." - "Saw Soe Bee" (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #70, 12/03)

The widespread campaign of crop destruction is a key instrument employed by the SPDC in its ongoing attempts to control the civilian population. In other parts of Karen State, the SPDC destroys villagers' fields and crops in an effort to drive the villagers out of the hills and down into the SPDC controlled villages. The logic behind such a campaign is that by destroying the crops and food supplies, the villagers will slowly starve and have little other choice but to come down from the hills. In Thaton District, however, most villagers are already living in SPDC controlled villages. The destruction of their food supplies is not a move to flush them out of the areas that lie beyond SPDC control, but rather one of continued harassment by the SPDC to exert even greater control over the villagers. The SPDC maintains that the fields that they destroy are used to feed the resistance. They claim that the fields belong to 'rebels' and the 'sons and wives of rebels'.

While it may be true that many of the villagers tending these fields may very well be the sons and wives of KNLA soldiers, this does not excuse the fact the SPDC is still targeting the civilian population over the actual combatants. Whenever an SPDC unit is ambushed by the KNLA, the SPDC turns to the villagers seeking retribution. For example, on April 3rd 2003, soldiers from IB #11 claimed that the KNLA had laid landmines between Lay Kay and Ka Ter Ti villages at the site of where the SPDC would build their road. In retaliation, the SPDC burned 35 of the villagers' hill fields along the length of the road.

"They burned the hill fields along the path. They burned eight hill fields around Noh Ber Baw. They also burned fields at Yoh Kla village, Htaw Klaw Kee village and until Th'Waw Po village. ... The event [fighting] occurred with our nephews [KNLA]. When we went to meet them [SPDC], they said, 'Burn that hill field when you go back.' We didn't burn it. They burned it themselves when they came." - "Daw Khu Pu" (F, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #56, 11/03)

"They destroyed all of the paddy when it was the people's harvest time. When it was the people's time for threshing the paddy, they burned the people's paddy ground [the area set aside in the fields for threshing the paddy], so we couldn't get anything to eat. We didn't dare to complain to them because we were afraid of them. We had to stay like that. We didn't dare to complain to them. If we spoke to them, they would have become angry and tortured us." - "Naw Maw Thee" (F, 20), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #55, 4/03)

IX. Education and Health

Education

“Q: Do they allow the villagers in your area to build schools so the children can study their own language?”

A: They do not allow this at all. Now the parents of the children understand that if their children are not educated, they won't get respect. They wish to send their children to be educated, but the parents have to work for them [SPDC and DKBA] a lot so they can't send their children to school. Some of them leave school after they pass 4th Standard [Grade]. They have to work. You can see them among the people when they go for 'loh ah pay' [forced labour]. Really those children should be studying and staying under the care of a teacher. It is time for them to find education, but now they have to work. Their parents do not have enough food to eat, so they have to help their parents. For schools, they [SPDC] say that these things are taken care of by the SPDC, but they don't provide them anything.” - “Saw Kaw Thu” (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa'an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

Education is very important to most Karen villagers, with those living in Thaton District being no exception. Most villages of more than a few houses have a primary school, although some of these only reach 2nd Standard (Grade) instead of the usual 4th Standard. According to a KHRG field researcher, in 2004 there was only one high school, four middle schools and 89 primary schools with 223 teachers for 7,205 students throughout the whole district. These totals only include schools in areas accessible to KHRG field researchers or the KNU, and do not include schools in the towns of the district or the villages to the west of the Rangoon- Martaban motor road and railway. Villagers try to send their children to school for as long as they can. However, most students leave school either before completing or upon completion of primary school. For most villagers, going beyond primary school usually requires going to stay as a boarding student in a distant village. The high costs associated with education and the fact that sending a child away to study means one less set of hands to help at home or in the fields is often too great a burden on the family economy. For most children, schooling is of secondary importance next to the other more pressing needs of helping to provide for their families. Only 7% of students who complete primary school then attend middle school, and only 14% of this number then go on to high school. Children who are able to study often find that their studies are interrupted. Whenever the SPDC enters a village, families and teachers may flee or the students become afraid and stay close to their families in case of trouble. As a result, many schools are only able to operate one week out of every few, with many of them closing altogether during the harvest season.

Teachers are also unable to devote all of their time to teaching because their salaries are too low to live on and they must spend some of their time working to provide for their families.

“There are only three Standards. We increased it to six Standards, but the SPDC came and destroyed it. They didn't like it. It is not easy [for us] to improve. They don't like the Karen.” - “Saw Ba Ray” (M, 26), teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #33, 3/02)

“I am teaching but I don't get a salary. Sometimes the enemy [SPDC] comes and oppresses them [the villagers] and they have to go. They don't have free time. They have no money for school fees. They have to go for the Burmese [to perform forced labour]. They also have to find food for themselves. They have weak points, so they can't pay for the school fees. I taught for the whole year, but last year I received only seven baskets [147 kgs. / 322 lbs.] of paddy.” - “Saw Ba Ray” (M, 26), teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #33, 3/02)

Schools in Thaton District can be divided into three different categories according to who administers them: village schools, mission schools, and SPDC schools. Village schools are organised, administered, and built by the villagers themselves, though they sometimes receive support from the KNU Education Department. The teachers are commonly villagers from the community who have received some schooling, although many have not gone further than 4th Standard themselves. As a salary, the other villagers give them a small amount of pocket money

and some food. Most teachers in these schools do not stay for long because they cannot get enough food or money to provide for themselves and their families. The SPDC typically allows these schools to exist up to 4th Standard. The mission schools are paid for by Christian groups and are staffed by missionaries from Moulmein or places such as Bassein in the Irrawaddy Delta. The teachers in these schools are paid salaries from the mission, but the villagers are also required to provide them a place to stay, food, and some money for travel. The SPDC tolerates these schools so long as they do not surpass 3rd Standard. The SPDC schools are usually staffed by one or more teachers appointed by the SPDC Department of Education. The teachers are paid by the SPDC, but the villagers are expected to provide the teachers with food. Sometimes these Department of Education teachers resent being posted to rural Karen areas, so before long they disappear and are not replaced; in some cases they bribe education officials in town to keep paying their salaries as though they were at the school, but they never return. Many villages also hire villagers as teachers to work alongside the SPDC teachers. The village teachers are completely provided for by the other villagers; the SPDC provides them with nothing. Only the bigger villages have SPDC schools. The SPDC schools are permitted to continue all the way to the completion of secondary schooling to 10th Standard, although there is only one high school in the whole district.

“There is a school to 4th Standard. There is one teacher and about 30 students. The SPDC hasn’t come to make trouble [for the school] yet. Kawthoolei [villager slang for the KNU] is distributing enough support with Karen text books, books and pens. The schoolteacher was chosen by the villagers and the KNU. Aaaa takes care of her with money and the villagers give one basket of paddy from each house per year.” - “Daw Lah Zin” (F, 48), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #28, 3/02)

“There are two female teachers. Really the government has to support the school. The government supported one schoolteacher who came for one or two days and then went back. We couldn’t do anything, so we have to have our own teachers. We provide them with one basket [21 kgs. / 46 lbs.] of paddy each for one year. This year we can’t give them the full amount of paddy and money.” - “Naw Lah Eh Mu” (F, 53), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #32, 3/02)

“I have been teaching for 15 years. I say only 15 years, but if I count it, it is more than 15 years. We work for the civilians and are concerned with Kawthoolei because we love our nationality. We are interested in working for every nationality on every side. KNU supports us and the villagers support us. They all support us. ... I received 6,000 Kyat this year when Thra [‘teacher’] aaaa came back. It was from Kawthoolei for the school. I haven’t received any Kyat [from the SPDC]. Sometimes I receive about 30 or 35 baskets [630-735 kgs. / 1,380-1,610 lbs] of paddy from the villagers. I have also received 25 baskets [525 kgs. / 1,150 lbs.]. I didn’t get enough to eat in any year. I have had to buy food to eat every year. We breed pigs and chickens and we have to sell them.” - “Naw Kay Lah” (F, 42), village head and teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #41, 8/02)

“There is a school set up by the villagers. There are 79 students. The people say that we set the school up ourselves so there are a lot of school fees. There are four Standards. There were three teachers last year, but there will be two teachers this year. They [SPDC] don’t support anything in our village. It is an independent school. We provide two, three or four baskets of paddy [to the teachers]. My daughter is studying in 2nd Standard, so she had to give three baskets. The small kindergarten is one basket. ... We don’t get support from anywhere. People [villagers] gave it to us last year. The people gave it to yyyy village and then the people from yyyy village provided it to us. Nobody gave it to us. Our school is self-reliant. The villagers support themselves. ... The yyyy school is a government school [SPDC]. We can’t apply to get one [an SPDC school] yet. We are not big enough, so we can’t do it. In our self-reliant school we collect one or two baskets of paddy. If the government came to set it up for us, we would know things and be clever. We built a school but it is not successful. We built a hall and the students are studying in the hall. I can say that because our school was not successful, we will dismantle it and come back and build the school in the middle of the village. We will build the school again.” - “Daw Lay Wah” (F, 50), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #54, 4/03)

“We have to collect their [the teachers] payment from the villagers. The villagers have to pay. For two teachers, it is two baskets [50 kgs. / 110 lbs.] of rice and 10,000 Kyat each month. With the 10,000 Kyat they buy chillies, salt and fishpaste and things they like to eat. The government supports them and the villagers also have to

support them.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

“The schoolteachers come from Rangoon, Thaton, Bilin and Lay Kay. The government takes care of them. They get a salary. They receive 1,650 Kyat per month. That is for the small teachers. They are the teachers from Lay Kay. The higher teachers get about 3,000 or 4,000 Kyat. The civilians also have to support them. We have to provide them with salt and fishpaste. We have to build houses for them. We have to provide rice and everything completely. The only thing that we don’t have to provide for them is clothes. We provide all the other things like firewood. ... They sometimes collect two or three bowls [3-5 kgs. / 7-10 lbs.] of rice. When they are finished with their food for one week, they collect it again. It adds up to a lot for one year. They collect it from the whole village each month. It is over 10 baskets [250 kgs. / 550 lbs.] of rice. After they collect it they sell the rice and buy chillies and monosodium glutamate.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

“There was a school up to the 5th Standard. There were two female schoolteachers. The Burmese government appointed them. There are about 30 or 40 students. The school wasn’t open regularly. The children only studied two or three times a month. They [the teachers] arrived at 9 or 10 o’clock. The people had to go and pick them up by boat at yyyy. When they arrived at 9 or 10 o’clock, they taught one or two words to the children and then let the children go free. They don’t teach Karen, they only teach two subjects, Burmese and English.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

“There is a school to 5th Standard. At first, we villagers arranged it ourselves on a self-help basis. Later we asked for some pity. The villagers are forced a lot and we couldn’t hire the teachers anymore. Then we went to the SPDC and asked for teachers. If we were successful, we could pay less [because the SPDC would pay the salaries]. Now the SPDC has come to send three teachers for us. They only sent them and we have to feed them. They pay for their salaries in monthly payments.” - “Saw Cho Aung” (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

“The KNU helps some for the teachers. They are really the same nationality, so they love their nationality and they want to help. They teach the teachers, encourage the teachers and explain to the teachers. Really, the teachers don’t belong to the SPDC. They belong to the KNU, and they can have a small primary school. They cannot have a high school.” - U Maung Shwe” (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #67, 7/03)

“There is a school in xxxx village. There are only four Standards. There are two female schoolteachers. The government organised it and the government supports them. They provide everything for them. We don’t have to support them.” - “Saw Loh Mu” (M, 45), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #93, 5/04)

Students have to buy their own books, stationery, and other school supplies. Often the teachers buy the textbooks and notebooks in town and come back and sell them to the students. In the village schools, some books are also supplied by the KNU Education Department, but these have to be carried in from Thailand so not so many of these are distributed to students. The KNU also sometimes provides pencils and notebooks, but most students must buy their own. The SPDC does not provide anything besides the teachers to its schools. Students in these schools must still buy their own textbooks and notebooks. The textbooks cost from 50 to 100 Kyat each. Entrance fees for the primary schools are in the range of 2,000-3,000 Kyat per year. According to “Saw Eh K’Thaw” [Interview #7], a Karen district official for Thaton District, in addition to this, the students must also pay a bribe of 4,000-5,000 Kyat in order to transfer in from another school. If the students cannot pay this, the school will say that it is full and turn the students away. The students also have to buy their uniforms and pay ‘sports fees’ to the township and state authorities. The entrance fees asked in the village schools are not nearly as high. The average entrance fees to attend a village school are approximately 200-800 Kyat depending on the level being studied.

“They [SPDC] said they would offer support [for the school], but when we went to buy books they were very expensive. They told us to go and buy them from other shops. They sold only one or two books. There are about 40 or 50 students, so one or two books is not enough. We had to go and buy them from other shops. If one book is 50 Kyat, we had to go and buy them for 100 Kyat from the shop. We always have to buy them like this. I see that what they [SPDC] are doing is

wrong.” - “U Maung Lay” (M, 39), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #23, 2/02)

“The books come from above [through the KNU]. They helped with some and we bought some. We went to buy them in Ka Ma Maung. They [SPDC] make problems if we meet them. We have to carry the books secretly. We don’t dare to carry the Karen books. We have to carry them secretly.” - “Saw Ba Ray” (M, 26), teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #33, 3/02)

“They [teachers] collect entrance fees of 200 Kyat for each student. The students don’t have to give school fees. They send the entrance fees to the office, then they buy books for the students.” - “Saw Loh Mu” (M, 45), village head from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #93, 5/04)

“The SPDC government produces the textbooks by quota. One book for kindergarten, 1st Standard, 2nd Standard, or 3rd Standard is 80 Kyat. One dozen of the notebooks are 300 Kyat. One set of textbooks is the Myanmar Reader, General Natural Science, Reader 1 and Math 1 and it costs 400 Kyat. Everything costs [a total of] 700 Kyat. We haven’t paid the cost yet.” - “Saw Heh Taw” (M, 51), village head and school teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #74, 5/04)

“They have the chance to study, but their parents don’t have enough food to eat so the children can’t study well. They just study one or two grades, but then they have to leave the school and work for their homes [in the fields]. Right now, the school entrance fees are very expensive. In order to study, each student has to pay entrance fees of about 2,000 or 3,000 Kyat. They don’t have enough [money] to buy materials for school such as books and pens, so many of them can’t send their children to school. If we estimate, there are only 50% of the children who can study. The other children can’t study. ... They have to pay bribes to the schoolteachers to move to the other schools. If you don’t give 5,000 Kyat, they don’t give you the school leave [transfer] pass. If you don’t give them 4,000 or 5,000 Kyat, they say that the places are full.” - “Saw Eh K’Thaw” (M, 55), Karen district official (Interview #7, 11/03)

“One person is 200 Kyat. The entrance fee is 200 Kyat. Each student from 3rd Standard and 4th Standard has to give 60 Kyat for the township and state sports fees. Kindergarten and 1st and 2nd Standards have to give 30 Kyat.” - “Saw Heh Taw” (M, 51), village head and school teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #74, 5/04)

“Yes, we have to give entrance fees. One of my daughters studied in 4th Standard and they asked her to hand over 800 Kyat for entrance fees.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

“The teacher goes to buy stationery in the town, but the students have to pay for it. The students have to give school fees and each student has to give 800 Kyat.” - “Saw Zaw Kee” (F, 48), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #62, 7/03)

In Bilin township there is only one middle school and one high school. Most students who can continue their studies go to the high school in Lay Kay to continue their studies beyond 5th Standard, but some go to Bilin. Fees for studying in town can be high. According to the “Saw Eh K’Thaw” [Interview #7], a Karen district official for Thaton District, students who want to study in 5th Standard are required to pay up to 50,000 Kyat. Karen students are able to attend university and can get student cards. However, to take the 10th Standard exam, the final exam of high school needed to get into university, the students must have a national identity card. Many of the villagers from remoter rural areas do not have these cards. In order to get a national identity card a villager must go to an SPDC official and ‘develop an understanding’, which means plead with the official and pay a bribe of about 10,000 Kyat. Most students from the rural areas would be unable to attend anyway because of the high cost of the tuition and the costs of living in town. Attending a university in Burma can cost as much as 150,000 Kyat per month. The only other alternative for further education is to attend one of the schools in one of the refugee camps in Thailand, where there are high schools and a few informal post-secondary programmes. The further hazards to studying in town were illustrated in 2003 and again in 2004, when the SPDC forced all male and female students above 7th Standard to attend basic military training [see also ‘The Pyitthu Sit’ in ‘The Military Situation’ section]. Many students abandoned their studies and returned home from the towns out of fear of this training. They became worried that after the training they would be forced to join the SPDC Army. The SPDC had already asked many of the older students to join the Army after the training.

“Some students are happy to continue studying [past 3rd Standard]. Some students went to study in Lay Kay and some students went to study at a mission school. Some students went to study in the higher place [refugee camps]. Some students do not enjoy studying. They play.” - “Saw Ba Ray”

(M, 26), teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #33, 3/02)

“The government doesn’t take responsibility for the students in town. They have to pay fees for food and for school. ... I asked the people who go to stay [to study in the towns]; they have to pay 150,000 Kyat for food [per year]. The government doesn’t support them.” - “Saw Eh K’Thaw” (M, 55), Karen district official (Interview #7, 11/03)

“At present in 2003 and 2004, the female and male students who go to study above 7th Standard in town, have been forced by the SPDC government to attend basic military training. Government servants such as schoolteachers and medics also have to attend basic military training. They also called the villagers

less than 45 years old to attend. I saw female school teachers from yyyy attend the training while their school was closed. Each of them [the trainees] had to take a piece of wood or bamboo that was 3 cubits [1.4 metres / 4.5 feet] in length and one fist [15 cms. / 6 inches] in circumference. When they arrived at the training place, they used them as guns. It is difficult for them to find wood and bamboo in town. They gave 3 months of training to the females and as well as the males. They have conducted this training in almost every town. The reason for this training is that they will fight back when the other countries come to invade. Many students came back from town because of the training. They do not dare to study anymore. They worried that they would have to become SPDC Army soldiers because they had attended the training. They [SPDC] asked the older students to join the Army.” - “Saw Ghaw Wah” (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 6/04)

Village schools and mission schools are able to teach their own syllabus, including the Karen language (usually provided that the SPDC does not find out). SPDC schools follow the SPDC curriculum which is

heavily Burman-centric. These schools only teach in Burmese and English. The teaching of Karen is not permitted in these schools. The teachers, most of whom are appointed by the SPDC, often cannot teach Karen anyway as they are typically either ethnic Mon or Burman and are thus unable to even speak the language. One KHRG researcher has reported that there are no teachers who are capable of teaching Karen in any of the SPDC schools in all of

Thaton township. The only way for students to learn Karen is through secret lessons taught by other villagers who know how to read and write. In xxxx village in Bilin township, for example, the students study Karen in secretive lessons once a week from a ‘school worker’.

“They don’t allow us to study Karen subjects. Now they don’t study Karen. They only study Burmese and English. They do

not allow us to teach the Karen language. They will argue if we teach it. They don’t allow it, so the people don’t teach it.” - “Naw Hser Paw” (F, 43), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #24, 2/02)

“Yes, there is a school. There are 9 Standards and there are about 10 teachers. There are about 200 or 300 students. Many students come to study at xxxx. It is a government school. ... They don’t allow them to teach Karen now. At this time the children do not understand Karen. They don’t allow it. My sons are in 7th and 8th Standard, but they don’t understand any words in Karen. The Burmese don’t allow it.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

“They don’t teach Karen. That is why we thought we would ask one girl [from the village] to teach. When we went to the Education Chief’s office, the Education Chief said that we could study it. But for them, they can’t speak Karen, so they can’t teach it. They said they would allow us to teach. They said that, but they didn’t give us Karen teachers, they gave us Mon teachers.” -

To:	1.8.2003
Chairperson xxxx Village	
[We] Have to coordinate and discuss the construction of Noh Aw La School, so the elder yourself must come now, you are informed.	
[Sd.] Captain aaaa Frontline IB #xx	

Order #14: while meeting with the officer, the village head was told that he had to arrange to send 20 villagers each day to help in the construction of the Noh Aw La school. He was instructed that they should arrive on August 5th 2003, equipped with their own mattocks, chopping hoes, and bullock carts. [A copy of the original Burmese-language order may be viewed as Order #14 in Appendix F.]

"Saw Cho Aung" (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

The SPDC has taken over several of the village-run schools and renamed them 'Government Schools'. After declaring the schools to be 'Government Schools', the SPDC no longer allows Karen to be taught. One KHRG researcher, who described the condition as *"the dog covering the footprint of the pig"*, reported that in 2004, the SPDC took over many of the villagers' schools in this manner. For example, in 2002, construction began on the high school in Lay Kay village. The school was built with bricks using villager labour from the surrounding villages. The school goes to 10th Standard, the highest grade in Burmese schools. To pay for the construction the SPDC demanded a total of 420,000 Kyat from eight villages in the vicinity. In addition to the money, the villagers were also ordered to provide 300 tons of wood. On January 31st 2002, Colonel Min Aung Laing, commanding officer of LID #44, distributed the *Shwe Pa Si Newsletter* ('Golden Drum'; Volume 1, Number 5), to villagers in Bilin township. The newsletter spoke of the development projects that the SPDC was going to implement for the good of the people. However the terms in the newsletter were never upheld and the soldiers simply forced the villagers to build the school and a clinic in Lay Kay village at their own expense. The villagers were also forced to pay for the newsletter. In reality the newsletter was merely another way for the corrupt commanding officers to line their pockets with money extorted from the villagers under the guise of development. The villagers were not happy about it, but were afraid to say anything for fear of the potential repercussions.

"They ordered us to build a school. They told us to do it independently. They ordered us to do it. We must build it. We finished planting the posts, but when they came to look at it, they said, '60 feet in length and 30 feet in width.' We had to do it exactly. I told him, 'Commander, the civilians are very weak. We can't do it. We can only do this. There are no floors, no walls and no roof.' He said, 'I asked you to do it, so I can't go back and report it to the town. It is for your villagers to develop for the future.' He encouraged us with a strict rope. Now we have finished building it. They haven't given it a name yet. He said, 'Now your village is self-reliant.' I told him, 'If you want to take a photo, you can take it. You can show it to the Division or the department concerned, so I can get money for the cost of the zinc [roofing] and nails.' He said it was no matter and just wrote it down. I told him, 'They gave over 600,000 Kyat for Pwoh school. The length of my school is longer than Pwoh school so it will cost more.' I told him the expenses for the building fees, post

fees and bamboo fees." - "Saw Heh Taw" (M, 51), village head and school teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #74, 5/04)

"In the beginning the monk wanted to build the school. He had already been preparing it for four or five years, but he hadn't built it. He milled the wood, but it wasn't enough. Then the Division Commander came and told him, 'Monk, you have to build a middle school.' The monk told him, 'I don't have the wood. I also don't have money.' He said, 'No problem, I can do it.' He sent over one ton of wood. The people had already milled a lot of wood here. We had to carry bricks from Du Yin Seik. We had to carry them to P'Nweh Klah. P'Nweh Klah had to send them on to Ha T'Reh and Ha T'Reh had to provide 'loh ah pay' [forced labour] for sand and bricks. We had to work the whole rainy season. We had to go and get rations for them. We were tired. They harassed us when things were lost." - "Saw Tah Ler Kee" (M, 61), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #94, 5/04)

"One time [in 2003] we had to build a government middle school. It was during the month of Tawthalin [Burmese month corresponding to September] when the water flooded. We had to go and carry bricks and sand for the whole rainy season. It was better during the months of Thadinkyaut and Tasaungmone [Burmese months corresponding to October and November respectively]. We were not willing to do this. They came and forced us to do it." - "Saw Kwee Tha" (M, 56), village head from xxxx village, Pa'an township (Interview #90, 5/04)

"They talked about the school matter [at a meeting with the Division Commander]. They said they would like to make Lay Kay school up to 9th [10th] Standard. Every village such as Ler Po, Thu K'Bee, Paya Raw, Ler K'Ter, Ta Oo Ni, Yoh Klah, Htee Pa Doh Hta, Khaw Po Pleh, Htee Chit Baw, Ler Klaw and Ta Paw had to help them. He said to help them so the children will be educated. We had to try. Every government likes education. There are only a few houses in our village, so they demanded 30,000 Kyat. They demanded 40,000 Kyat and 50,000 Kyat from Thu K'Bee and Paya Raw villages. They demanded it from every village for making Lay Kay school. They demanded 100,000 Kyat from Htee Pa Doh Hta, Yoh Klah and Lay Kay villages. We had to collect it from the villagers." - "Daw Lah Zin" (F, 48), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #28, 3/02)

“There is a school to 10th Standard. I think there are around 20 teachers. They [SPDC] say it is their school, but they demanded the timber from us.” - “Saw Zaw Kee” (F, 48), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #62, 7/03)

“They [SPDC] said that they worked but they didn’t and took it [the money] when they went back. We had to buy zinc [roofing] and cement. We had to work with the villagers from Lay Kay. The villagers in Lay Kay also had their own work. We told them that we had our own work. They told us to work and help each other a little bit and that they would also help us the government way.” - “Daw Lah Zin” (F, 48), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #28, 3/02)

“When we read the newsletter distributed by the SPDC Army, we thought that it would be good for the villagers. The newsletter said that they would develop the education and healthcare for the villagers. The children of the villagers would be able to start reading. It said that the SPDC government would give education and health rights to the villagers who live amongst the mountains, but really it is for the Burmese SPDC Army officer, Light Infantry Division #44 commander Colonel Min Aung Laing to get money. He sells them [the newsletter] to the villagers to get money. ... The villagers who are living in the Lay Kay area of Bilin township complained that Colonel Min Aung Laing forced them to build a high school and a clinic in Lay Kay village. The SPDC government didn’t help them with any of the expenses for the school or the clinic.” - “Saw Ghaw Wah” (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Interview #1, 4/02)

Health

The health care situation for villagers in Thaton District is poor. There are no hospitals in the area besides those in the large towns of Thaton, Bilin, Pa’an (in Pa’an District), Ka Ma Maung (in Papun District), and Moulmein (in Mon State). There are few clinics and even fewer that actually have trained medical personnel and medicines. Villagers with money go to seek treatment at the SPDC hospitals in the towns, but this is extremely expensive and those without money must treat their illnesses as best they can with traditional herbal medicines in the village. Some villages have trained medics or midwives, but no clinic. The medics or midwives operate out of their own homes, prescribing medicines which the villagers must then find themselves. Occasionally SPDC Army medics give medications when they stay in villages. However this is not done free of charge, with the villagers having to give one or two chickens or some rice in exchange for the medicine. KNLA medics also treat villagers when they are around.

The SPDC continues to restrict the carrying of medicine in the district, so villagers can have problems if they are caught carrying it. The SPDC believes that if villagers are in the possession of medications they will give them to the KNU, heedless of the fact that the vast majority of villagers cannot afford even the smallest amount of medicine to treat their own families. The penalties for carrying medicines may include beatings, torture, arrest, and/or a stint of forced labour for the military. Villagers

with SPDC-approved medical training, however, are permitted to carry medicines.

“We have a nurse and a midwife in the village. We have to say that they belong to them [SPDC] because they went to get training from them. They gave them certificates. They take care of us, but we have to pay for the medicine.” - “Naw Kay Lah” (F, 42), village head and teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #41, 8/02)

“Health is very bad in our village. The children aren’t well because we don’t have enough medicine and it is far [to go to get medicine]. When there are serious diseases we have to go to Pa’an, Thaton or Bilin. We have to spend money. When my wife went one time it cost 10,000, 20,000, up to 30,000 Kyat. We couldn’t do anything. We had to borrow it from other people and we had a debt. We couldn’t do anything. There weren’t any grains of rice at home.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

“There is no hospital in the village; we have to go to Thaton. We have to buy all the medicine with our own money. If we don’t have 70,000 or 80,000 Kyat we are going to die. We must go to the hospital.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

“They haven’t set up anything. When we ask for medicine, we have to feed them chicken. If we don’t feed them chicken, we have to feed them rice. If you don’t feed them, they don’t give you anything.” - “Naw Kay Lah” (F, 42), village head and teacher from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #41, 8/02)

“There is no clinic in the village, but there is one in the camp. We have to go to the camp. They give us medicine and injections. We don’t have to give money, but they ask us to get one chicken. It means we have to give it. They asked us to give small chickens. We had to buy vegetables, fish and frogs. It means that this is the fee. We had to buy it for them every morning. If you went every morning, you had to buy it for them every morning. They asked us to buy small chickens. We always had to buy them. If we didn’t buy them, they didn’t look after us carefully.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

“The people go to get the medicine. Sometimes we hear that they have prohibited medicine. Sometimes the people carry it secretly. The people don’t dare to show that they carry it. The people can only carry a few tablets. When Thramu [‘female teacher’] aaaa went she brought a lot. She isn’t afraid because she treats the villagers. When there isn’t anyone going to buy medicine, they make it more expensive. We will die if we can’t treat it. We don’t dare to die.” - “Naw Thu Paw” (F, 43), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #26, 3/02)

“They [villagers] don’t dare to carry medicine. If the SPDC soldiers see them, they will kill them. Now they specify that batteries and medicine are very important things. The shopkeepers don’t dare to sell them freely. They take action if they see them.” - “Saw Cho Aung” (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

The KNU operates two clinics in the district which villagers are able to go to, but sometimes they have to walk long distances to get there. The KNU and Karen relief organisations have a few mobile health teams which operate in the area. These teams must get their medicines from Thailand and carry everything in their backpacks. As a result they are unable to take large amounts of medicines with them and quickly run out. KNU health workers often only have enough medicine to last two or three months at a time. The SPDC has punished villagers in the past for seeking medical help from the KNU and punished health workers for contacting the KNU. Furthermore,

the extent to which the SPDC now controls the district makes it virtually impossible for mobile Karen relief teams or KNU medics to gain access to all areas in need.

“Kawthoolei [KNU] keeps a civilian clinic. They call it ‘Number 3 Freedom Clinic’. We come here to get treatment and our diseases cured. Since I have been getting treatment in this clinic, they are treating us with the medicine they have. The medics tell us that sometimes they have problems with communications and that the distances are far. They treat us with the medicines they have. They give us food. They take care of us. They try to cure our diseases and we are satisfied with them. We are also very thankful for them.” - “Saw Mya Thein” (M, 25), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #15, 8/01)

“There are only our nephews [other villagers] who went to learn medicine and then they came back to treat us. We go to ask for medicine from our nephews [KNLA and Karen relief medics]. If they have it they come to give it to us. If they don’t have it, we die. Sometimes there is not enough because they have to look after the whole village. It is not only me who gets sick, it is everyone. ... Sometimes they arrive. Now they are here [KNLA medics]. They tell them to come and look after the villagers. When they have medicine they look after us. When they don’t have it they can’t look after us.” - “Naw Kyi Doh” (F, 44), widowed villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #37, 7/02)

“The students come to take care of us once a year. They come to give medicine and injections. They are the Burmese students who work together with the KNU [probably the Backpack Health Worker Teams (BPHWT)].” - “Naw Wah” (F, 38), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #38, 8/02)

“KNU takes care of us. Now the backpack workers come to look at us. They take care of us. They also have to be afraid of the SPDC. As far as I know, they take care of as many people as they can. Sometimes we can go to see them when they enter our village if they have medicine. They don’t have medicine every time. If they have medicine they take care of us. Don’t think it’s the SPDC [who helps the villagers].” - “Saw Cho Aung” (M, 49), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #64, 7/03)

“If we get sick we sometimes ask people from www or xxxx. Sometimes we buy medicine in the shop and sometimes we get medicine from people’s bags [backpack medics]. Sometimes if we need medical injections we have to call aaaa and sometimes we call bbbb. In cases of severely sick patients, if we can’t treat them, we send them to Pyi or sometimes they die at home.” - “Naw Tha Wai” (F, 46), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #66, 7/03)

At various times the SPDC has offered basic medicine or midwife trainings to the villagers. The villagers must pay their own costs for the trainings. A basic medic training in 2000-2001 cost 6,000 Kyat per month. For a midwife training in 2002, villages had to send three people and pay 3,000 Kyat per month for the training fees. The trainings generally take three months to complete. Women who have finished middle school are allowed to attend the basic midwife training. According to a KHRG field researcher, the SPDC held the trainings again in 2004, where they called for one villager from each village to attend medical training to become midwives. The costs demanded, however, had more than

doubled, costing the villages 40,000-50,000 Kyat to send one person to the training for three months. When the students came back they had to buy their own medicines and administer them themselves, although few were able to do this because they had no more money. No salaries are given to the medics by the SPDC. The medics and midwives have to ask the villagers to buy the medicines themselves and then bring them back to be administered.

“They went to learn it [medicine] from the SPDC and then they came back to take care of the villagers. They don’t get payment. They went to learn themselves and then they came back to take care of the villagers. They have to buy medicine. They buy it themselves and administer it. ... They had to pay the fees [for the medical training] themselves. It was 6,000 Kyat for a month. ... They [KNU medics] are in the village but they have to do it secretly. Right now they are working together [the KNU medics and the SPDC-trained medics]. They can stay when they understand each other.” - “Daw Way” (F, 53), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #9, 3/01)



This ten month old baby suffers from severe malnutrition. She lives in a village in southern Pa’an township that is encircled by SPDC Army camps. The regular demands of forced labour, food, and fees issued by the soldiers based in those camps leave this child’s parents with little time or resources to get enough food to feed their family. Many villagers in the region have become so impoverished that they can no longer adequately provide for their families. [Photo: KHRG]

“There is no clinic. We go to buy medicine in yyyy. We go to call the medics from yyyy. There is no clinic there. They are living in their homes. They attended training in another place. The people go and call them to give injections. We have to buy the medicine ourselves. After we buy it, we ask them to inject it.” - “Naw Htoh Kee” (F, 58), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #63, 7/03)

“For health there is no medical person with a high level [a doctor]. There is no hospital in the area. There are only health workers and basic midwives. People have to go and get treatment from them when they get sick and have diseases. They don’t treat you if you can’t give them money. ... The people who have gone and received health worker training from the SPDC must still pay for the medicine. People have to do many kinds of forced labour for them [SPDC], so they don’t have money to go and get treatment at the big hospital in the town – so they must die.” - “Saw Kaw Thu” (M, 37), Karen township official, Pa’an township (Interview #6, 6/03)

“We have a dispensary and a nurse who has a certificate from the SPDC. They can dare to come back and help the patients. The people [villagers] give them medicine one or two times to take care of the patients. The SPDC doesn’t give us medicine and doesn’t give us the nurse. It is just the villagers here who have to go to attend the training and get a certificate. If they come back to treat patients, they have to buy medicine to treat the patients. I have never seen the SPDC support us with medicine.” - U Maung Shwe” (M, 40), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #67, 7/03)

“The SPDC government called the health workers from each village tract to attend the midwife medical training. Some villages sent people to attend and it cost them 40,000 or 50,000 Kyat for 3 months of training. After they came back from the training, they couldn’t buy any medicine because they didn’t have any money. If they had money, they could buy it.” - “Saw Ghaw Wah” (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 6/04)

The SPDC also seems to have some kind of vaccination programme in the district, although very little evidence is presently available as to the effect or extent of this programme. It is unclear when the vaccinations actually took place or if the programme is still in progress. The evidence at hand states that the vaccinations were given to village children in Bilin township. This may have been a programme initiated by UNICEF, who have been involved in child

vaccination programmes in Burma. No evidence has emerged of similar programs being implemented in any of the other townships. The villager who described this to KHRG claimed that the children developed fevers after receiving the injections. However without further information it is impossible to say if the fevers experienced were a side-effect or the intention of the injection.

“Once we fed them and it cost more than the price of the medicine. They ate a lot, but they only gave one or two injections. The children’s buttocks were in pain and they ran. The people didn’t dare to come and show them [their children] again. They left after they gave the injections. The people later got fevers, but they [SPDC] didn’t look back.” - “U Maung Lay” (M, 39), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #23, 2/02); describing an SPDC vaccination program implemented in his village

Villagers suffer from various illnesses in Thaton District, yet they have little education about disease prevention. Malaria, dengue and other fevers, dysentery, anaemia, stomach ache, and diarrhoea are common. KHRG researchers say that tuberculosis is becoming more common and measles outbreaks can occur in the dry season. Many of the children suffer from jaundice, hepatitis, enlarged spleens (a symptom common with malaria), and malnutrition. Due to the inavailability and expense of medicines, many villagers treat themselves with traditional medicines made of roots and leaves, water anointed by a shaman, or by a traditional healer who ‘calls the spirit’ out of the afflicted part of the body. Many people die from illnesses which would be easily treatable if they were allowed access to pharmaceutical medicines. While malaria is a major killer, many villagers, especially malnourished children, succumb to readily treatable and highly preventable diseases such as diarrhoea and influenza.

In a move similar to the school construction campaigns discussed above, the SPDC has ordered the villagers to build clinics in each of the villages. Most of the small villages were unable to comply with this order, but clinics have been built in many of the bigger villages. After they were built, the SPDC came and took photographs of the clinics for use in their propaganda. They would then declare that the clinic was built by the SPDC for the good of the villagers. In reality, it is the villagers who pay for all the expenses associated with the construction and actually build the clinics. No medicines or medics are provided for the clinics after their completion, and they usually lie abandoned within months of their construction.

“They [SPDC] came to build a clinic, but their arms and legs never moved. Finally they reported that they had built it. They said they built it, but they shouted and scolded the people strongly. Their legs and arms didn’t do any work. They didn’t suffer. They didn’t pay for the cost of the nails and planks. They said they built it. They built it to be remembered. When we get peace in the country, they will say that they built the clinic in xxxx village. That is why I am lazy to do it. He [SPDC officer] said, ‘If there are no nails, bring bamboo ties. If there are no bamboo ties, I will burn it.’ I thought in my heart that if he wants to burn it, then burn it.” - “Daw Paw Ghay” (F, 50), village head from xxxx village (Interview #75, 7/03)

“The SPDC soldiers in the frontline area ordered the villagers to build clinics in their villages. The villagers from the big villages built them. After they built it, the SPDC took a photo and wrote down that ‘Regional Development Clinic’ was built by Battalion Commander Hla Win from LIB #376, but really the villagers paid for all of the expenses for the whole clinic. Even after it was built, there was no medicine.” - “Saw Ghaw Wah” (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Interview #4, 6/04)

X. Flight and Displacement

“We met a problem that we couldn’t endure. I went to porter and my wife stayed behind and didn’t have food to eat and she became sick. She checked her sputum when we arrived here [at a refugee camp in Thailand]. She has to stay in the TB room [a ward in the camp clinic reserved for tuberculosis sufferers]. Our children and my wife cannot meet each other. When we stayed there we couldn’t do anything. We couldn’t do our own work. We had to porter. I told them that my wife was sick, but the people [SPDC] didn’t pity me. They still forced me. I had to go. Sometimes when I came back my wife was very thin and near to death. We decided that dead or alive we would come here. I carried her when we came on the path. I carried her with difficulty with my elder brother. She couldn’t even walk anymore.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

Most villagers in Thaton District have very little choice but to endure life under the SPDC. The SPDC’s control over the district is widespread and SPDC and DKBA units are able to penetrate to almost every corner of the district. SPDC and DKBA military camps dot the region and an already extensive but ever-increasing network of roads criss-crosses the district, leaving precious few areas that lie beyond the reach of SPDC or DKBA patrols and even fewer where internally displaced persons (IDPs) are able to flee and hide. There are therefore not nearly as many IDPs living in hiding in the forests of Thaton District as there are in most of the other Karen districts. Thaton District is dominated by the vast floodplain formed by the Salween, Donthami, Yunzalin, and Bilin River basins with much of the land being utilised as flat rice fields. The terrain is not as mountainous or as heavily forested as some of the other districts further to the north and east [see **Map 2 of Karen State**], and does not offer the type of terrain where IDPs can easily remain undetected. In 2003, a KHRG field researcher estimated there to be approximately 1,000 IDPs living in hiding in the forests of Thaton District. Most of these IDPs are in Bilin township. These people are located in forests and field huts and must lead a mobile life, always watchful and prepared to flee to a new location whenever SPDC or DKBA patrols come near.

“There are no IDPs like children and old people all fleeing together. This is the plains area. There are Burmese Army camps all around us. There are not a lot of hills and mountains like in 5th Brigade [Papun District]. People cannot hide, so they do not dare to stay [in hiding as IDPs]. This is why most of the people live in villages.” - “Saw Ghaw Wah” (M, xx), KHRG field researcher (Interview #5, 11/04)

“They are not living in the plains area, but living in the mountains because the SPDC accused them of communicating with the KNU. The SPDC

criticised them and they are afraid of the SPDC. The SPDC also forced them to move to big villages and they didn’t dare to go stay there because they would have to work hard for the SPDC. Because of this they fled to stay in the mountains. There are probably many hundreds of people who have fled in the 1st Brigade [Thaton District] area. I don’t know exactly, but I think it could be 1,000. There are four townships and each township has some displaced people.” - “Saw Bah Heh” & “Saw Htoo Klay” (M, xx & M, xx), KHRG field researchers (Interview #2, 8/03)

Much of the internal displacement that exists in Thaton District occurs whenever an SPDC or DKBA column approaches a village, sending the villagers fleeing before the soldiers arrive, returning to their village only when they are certain that the soldiers have moved on. Generally, whenever a column enters a village the soldiers loot the villagers’ belongings and demand food [see the **‘Fees, Looting, and Extortion’** section]. The villagers have little choice but to keep their mouths shut and comply with the demands. To refuse or to complain would likely result in being arrested, beaten, and/or tortured. Villagers are also commonly taken and forced to accompany the troops in order to guide them to the next village, typically while walking in front as human minesweepers [refer to the **‘Forced Labour’** section]. Villagers have all witnessed or experienced such abuses before and know all too well the consequences of encountering SPDC forces, so they avoid contact with the SPDC wherever possible.

Local KNU authorities actively encourage villagers to remain in their villages rather than taking to the forests, because they are not able to provide for large numbers of IDPs in this area. The open terrain and the extent of SPDC control within the region make it too difficult to carry in enough aid to support many villagers for very long. When villagers can no longer endure the conditions in their village, many simply

move to live in other villages. Most of these villages are located in the plains and are usually places in which they already have family or friends who can help them.

“In the past there were about 500 houses in the village. Now there are only 70 or 80 houses. It is because they [SPDC] are forcing the villagers. They couldn’t suffer anymore, so they fled to stay in other villages. Now there are only 85 houses in the village.” - “U Maung Lay” (M, 39), village head from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #23, 2/02)

“They couldn’t work so they ran away to stay in other villages. They only have to carry as porters a few times when they go to stay in the plains area. The villagers who have support go to the plains and buy fields. They sell their belongings in the rural [hills] area and go buy fields in the plains and work there. Some of them are servants. The villagers who don’t have things hire themselves out [as daily wage labourers].” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)

The lack of places to hide means that if it becomes too difficult for villagers to remain in their own or nearby villages, there remains little choice but to find a way to flee to one of the refugee camps in Thailand. The journey to the border with Thailand can take two

days or more. The villagers must pay monetary bribes to secure passage through the many SPDC and DKBA checkpoints along the way while maintaining the pretence of only travelling locally and not to Thailand. One refugee interviewed by KHRG said that he had to pay a total of between 4,000 and 5,000 Kyat in bribes to the soldiers at the checkpoints before he and his wife were allowed to pass. Another villager disguised himself as a Buddhist monk so as to avert too many questions at the checkpoints.

Some refugees from Thaton District have told KHRG that they travelled to Thailand by way of the DKBA headquarters at Myaing Gyi Ngu (referred to below by its Karen name, Khaw Taw) and then on to Meh Th’Waw, where they cross into Thailand and hope to reach a refugee camp. However, the villagers must be very careful not to be suspected of flight to Thailand, because those suspected of fleeing are arrested by SPDC or DKBA forces.

“I fled because I couldn’t do anything. I couldn’t hire people and I couldn’t go myself [for forced labour]. When I could no longer endure it, I fled. ... We didn’t have time to work for ourselves. We worked for ourselves for one or two days, but we had to go and work for them for two or three days. We couldn’t do it.” - “Saw Eh K’Noh” (M, 57), refugee from xxxx village, Pa’an township (Interview #85, 1/03)



These villagers from Bilin township were labelled as KNU sympathisers by the SPDC and were forced to flee from their village to live in hiding as IDPs. Many villagers have been arrested, tortured, and/or killed by SPDC Army soldiers on suspicion of helping the KNU/KNLA. [Photo: KHRG]

“We came two days by truck. We took a bullock cart to Ohn Daw. We left after we took the bullock carts. When we arrived at Khaw Taw [Myaing Gyi Ngu in Burmese] we took a truck to Meh Th’Waw. When we arrived at Meh Th’Waw we stopped and then came here by truck. ... We had to use a lot of money. It was about 4,000 or 5,000 Kyat because we had to give 200 Kyat and 200 Kyat often. There were many checkpoints. The gates were Burmese [Army] and Ko Per Baw [‘Yellow Headbands’; villager slang for the DKBA].” - “Saw Dee Kay” (M, 50), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #53, 3/03)

“Her husband came recently. He came up by way of Khaw Taw. He didn’t come this way. He came up and wore yellow clothes [as a Buddhist monk]. We have to do many things so the Burmese don’t know.” - “Saw Dee Kay” (M, 50), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #53, 3/03)

“It took two days to arrive here. I didn’t meet any problems on the way. The only problem was that the truck broke down and we pushed. We walked from the village. We had to get a travel pass from the village head. We told them we were going to Ka Ma Maung. We had to pay 50 Kyat for one pass. One person is 50 Kyat. The village head asked for the money. When we went we met the Ko Per Baw and the Burmese [soldiers]. They asked us where we were going. We told them we were going to Ka Ma Maung. They looked at the passes. When we arrived at Ka Ma Maung we had to get another pass. We told them we were going to Meh Th’Waw. Each pass was 200 Kyat. We came together with five or six people including my children. ... There were a lot of camps. They demanded 200 Kyat from each person. They demanded it at four or five places until Meh Th’Waw.” - “Saw Bo Ghay” (M, 36), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #52, 3/03)

Even if they succeed in reaching Thailand, they still face a journey of over 50 kilometres to the nearest refugee camp through populated and unfamiliar territory with no money. If caught by Thai police, paramilitaries, Army, or forestry officials *en route* they will most likely be arrested and summarily deported back to Burma. Villagers as far inside Karen State as Thaton District have heard that the Thai authorities do not want them to come to the refugee camps, in addition to false rumours spread by the DKBA, SPDC, and Thai authorities that the border has been sealed and the camps closed. This has discouraged many villagers from attempting the journey, but some still go every year.

“Many people want to come, but they have heard that the people [the Thais] don’t open it [the refugee camp]. If the people open it they will come. They [the Thais] say that the people can’t enter. Many people would come if they could enter. Many people want to come.” - “Saw Say Tee” (M, 48), refugee from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #57, 5/03)

The constant demands for forced labour and extortion money by the SPDC and DKBA, the arbitrary arrests and physical abuse, and the lack of any real opportunities have all resulted in a lot of young people from Thaton District leaving to find work in Thailand.

They do not go to the refugee camps, but cross the porous border and either seek out work in one of the border towns, particularly in Mae Sot, or travel farther into Thailand. Most of this work is illegal and the migrants are very open to exploitation at the hands of Thai employers. This is especially so for girls and young women who can be lured or tricked into the commercial sex industry. Despite the dangers, many young people still choose this route as a way of getting enough money to send home to provide for their families. Much of this money goes towards recouping losses from paying SPDC and DKBA demands for food and money.

XI. Future of the Area

Although the ceasefire has largely brought a halt to military offensives and armed ambushes in Thaton District, there has not been a commensurate improvement in the situation faced by the villagers living there. Fighting still occurs whenever SPDC and KNLA forces stumble on each other; DKBA units still attack KNLA forces; SPDC patrols still hunt out and attack the homes of KNLA officers and their families; KNLA units still ambush SPDC patrols encroaching on their space; and all sides continue to use landmines. Whenever fighting does occur, villagers are forced to pay the price. Villagers have

pay that. The villagers don't do business. They must also think about us. They don't care about us. They want to force us to do any kind of work that they have. The only thing that we don't have to do is clean their anus." - "Saw Kyi Nu" (M, 28), villager from xxxx village, Bilin township (Interview #30, 3/02)

Most of the abuses and deprivations which the villagers must suffer are not outcomes of the armed conflict, however, but result from SPDC and DKBA efforts to extend their control over the region and



This hill field, lying adjacent to the Kyaik Khaw to Lay Kay car road was burned by SPDC Army troops in March 2002. The destruction of villagers' food supplies is a central tactic employed by the SPDC in its campaign for control over the region. [Photo: KHRG]

been arrested and tortured by the SPDC and DKBA following skirmishes with the KNLA. Large fines of as much as 50,000 to 100,000 Kyat have been imposed on nearby villages that have been held responsible for the attacks or for the explosion of landmines. Villagers are caught in a situation where they must juggle the demands of all sides, and where they are punished by each armed force for the actions of the others despite having no control over events.

"The people [KNLA] came and shot and one of them [SPDC] died. They fined the villagers 50,000, 60,000, 70,000 or 80,000 Kyat. We can't

exploit its civilian population. There is presently no indication that the use of forced labour, the regular demands for extortion money and building materials, the movement restrictions, or the overall general situation facing villagers is going to improve any time soon. There are, however, some indications that things may actually get worse. The construction of the numerous new roads presently being built with forced labour will lead to the even greater militarisation of the region, and will subsequently require the continued use of forced labour as the villagers must maintain, clear, and guard those roads. All military camps that will ultimately be built

along the lengths of those roads will be, if history is anything to go by, built with forced labour and supplies portered out to them by the villagers. More camps will also likely lead to more demands on top of the plethora that the villagers must now endure, as the commanding officers of those new camps demand that they too receive a slice of limited village resources. SPDC officers make demands that take no account of the limited resources and time available to villagers, presumably because they are only interested in gaining as much wealth as they can before being rotated out of the area. The apparently unquenchable greed of some of the commanding

officers that have been and are presently based in the region acts as a noose slowly tightening around the villagers' necks as they slowly become more vulnerable to poverty, debt, disease, and hunger. The resources of rural areas like Thaton District are being systematically looted and transferred to urban areas, where they are used to finance the business ventures and urban development which the SPDC presents to the outside world as 'economic growth' and 'national development'.

The SPDC and the DKBA both operate a number of money-making projects in the district, with trends showing that this practice is on the rise. Almost all of these ventures are implemented through uncompensated confiscation of villagers' land and the use of forced labour and should be closely watched, as some of them are conducted in conjunction with private firms. The huge 5,000 acre rubber plantation in Bilin township co-owned and operated by Rangoon-based company Max Myanmar, for which the land was confiscated from local villagers without compensation, is perhaps the most striking example of this. The upgrading and paving of a number of the roads in the district is a

development that also requires ongoing observation, as not only is this being done with forced labour, but it will also facilitate a much larger and more rapid influx of SPDC Army troops and 'investment' projects.

The situation confronting the villagers of Thaton District is unstable and uncertain. When the abuses they face and the demands placed upon them become too great to bear, villagers here have few places to run. Unlike some other Karen districts, the hills are not high enough nor the forests large and impenetrable enough for significant numbers of villagers to evade SPDC and DKBA patrols for long. Flight to one of the refugee camps in Thailand is long, dangerous, and uncertain, preventing many villagers from attempting the journey. Most villagers for the time being have to persevere with the situation with little outside help. They draw on their own resourcefulness, finding ways to outwit or evade those who place demands on them, sharing burdens and resources among themselves to survive and retain as much control over their own lives as they can, yet living under the SPDC is taking a heavy toll on them. The seemingly endless list of demands and ever-increasing militarisation of the district has



Villagers from Bilin township cutting back the brush from beside the Bilin - Papun car road for LID #44 in November 2002. The villagers were ordered to clear all trees, bushes, and scrub from within 50 feet [15 metres] of either side of the road to create wide 'killing zones' to protect SPDC Army units using the road from KNLA ambushes. [Photo: KHRG]

created a climate of fear and resentment, and casts a shadow under which it is increasingly difficult to survive.

“We work one day and eat one day. We can get food to eat if we can work. If we can’t work, we can’t get any food to eat. In this situation, the Burmese also force us to work. The Burmese [soldiers] fine us if we can’t work enough for them. We are afraid of them so we have to do it. We don’t have money to pay them. We don’t have land to run to. As the Burmese say, ‘We have no land to run to. We have no money to pay.’ We can’t do anything, so we have to suffer among them.” - “Saw Wee Lee” (M, 42), villager from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #101, 11/03)

“There were 200 houses. Now there are only 100 houses remaining including the widows. They have all gone to stay in other villages and have become their villagers. Some of them have gone down to stay in the lower places and some of them have built houses in Thaton. Some of them have come here [to the refugee camp]. Some of them have gone up to yyyy or zzzz. Some of them have gone to stay in Bilin. Some of them have

gone to stay in the plains. The villagers are fleeing because they can’t suffer it. They are forced to work, but they don’t give us enough rice to work. We didn’t have food to eat. They didn’t have rules when they forced us to work. If they forced us to work for 15 days, they should release us after 15 days. They should have released us when we arrived in other villages. But they are not like that. They didn’t release us when we arrived in other villages. They arrested more porters when they arrived in the other villages. They forced all the porters to carry their backpacks. They walked carrying only themselves and their equipment. I looked at them. They always oppressed the villagers.” - “Saw Play Kee” (M, 40), refugee from xxxx village, Thaton township (Interview #98, 3/03)



These villagers were ordered to cut and mill this log and others like it into planks for the SPDC in May 2001. They were not paid for their labour. [Photo: KHRG]

Appendix A: Endnotes

¹ Smith, Martin (1999), 'The Surrender of the KRC', in: *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (2nd Ed.), pp: 213-218. London: Zed.

² Selth, Andrew (2002), 'Recruitment, Training, and Doctrine', in: *Burma's Armed Forces: Power without Glory*, pp: 76-99. Norwalk: EastBridge.

³ 'Lt-Gen Maung Bo inspects development undertakings in Mon, Kayin States', in: *New Light of Myanmar*, May 9th 2005.

⁴ 'Lt-Gen Khin Maung Than Oversees Development of Ayeyawady Division', in: *New Light of Myanmar*, February 5th 2005.

⁵ Aung Zaw, 'Tycoon Turf', in: *The Irrawaddy*, Vol. 13, No. 9, September 2005, p. 20. Chiang Mai: Nopburee Press.

⁶ International Campaign to Ban Landmines (2004), *Landmine Monitor Burma/Myanmar Annual Report 2004; Special Five Year Review*.

⁷ Burmese Border Consortium (2003), *Reclaiming the Right to Rice: Food Security and Internal Displacement in Eastern Burma*. p.40. Bangkok: Burmese Border Consortium.

Appendix B:

Index of Interviews and Field Reports

This index summarises the interviews, field reports, and documents quoted in this report. While a great many more villagers and refugees were interviewed for this report, this list shows only those who have been directly quoted in the body of this report. The interview numbers correspond to those used in the quote captions. All names of those interviewed have been changed, and their village names omitted to protect them from possible reprisals from the SPDC or DKBA. Approximately 15% of those included in this list had already fled their homes and at the time of being interviewed were living as refugees in Thailand. In the summaries below, **SPDC** = State Peace and Development Council, **DKBA** = Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, **KNU** = Karen National Union, **UXO** = Unexploded Ordnance, and **IDP** = Internally Displaced Person.

Field Reports by KHRG Field Researchers

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Summary
FR1	5/05	"Saw Htoo Klay"	M	xx	Forced labour, supplying materials, SPDC, DKBA, attempted rape
FR2	6/05	"Saw Htoo Klay"	M	xx	Food security, education, health, SPDC, DKBA
FR3	6/05	"Saw Bah Heh"	M	xx	General situation, ceasefire, extortion, supplying materials, food security, education, health, SPDC, KNU, forced labour

Interviews with KHRG Field Researchers

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Summary
1	4/02	"Saw Ghaw Wah"	M	xx	General situation, education, extortion, forced labour, health
2	8/03	"Saw Bah Heh" & "Saw Htoo Klay"	M	xx & xx	General situation. Food security, IDP, military situation, forced relocation, <i>Tha Ka Sa Pa</i> , <i>Pyitthu Sit</i> , DKBA, drugs, KNU, forced labour
3	1/04	"Saw Bah Heh"	M	xx	General situation, landmines
4	6/04	"Saw Ghaw Wah"	M	xx	General situation, education, military situation, health, forced labour
5	11/04	"Saw Ghaw Wah"	M	xx	General situation, IDP, landmines, UXO, DKBA, restrictions, food security

Interviews with Karen Relief Workers and Officials

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Summary
6	6/03	"Saw Kaw Thu"	M	37	Karen township official: Education, health, military situation, <i>Tha Ka Sa Pa</i> , DKBA, restrictions, drugs, forced labour, extortion, taxes
7	11/03	"Saw Eh K'Thaw"	M	55	Karen district official: Food security, crop destruction, military situation, restrictions, education, forced labour
8	1/04	"Saw Hla Wah"	M	40	Karen relief worker: Food security, forced labour, education, landmines, health, UXO, DKBA

Interviews with Villagers from Bilin Township

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Village	Summary
9	3/01	"Daw Way"	F	53	xxxx	Forced labour, looting, general situation, health, extortion
10	4/01	"Saw Dee Ghay"	M	50	xxxx	Detention, torture, shooting, food security
11	5/01	"Naw Lay Mo"	F	60	xxxx	Killing
12	5/01	"Saw Ghaw"	M	30	xxxx	Detention, torture, looting
13	6/01	"Saw Mya Kaw"	M	40	xxxx	Detention, torture, forced labour, human shields
14	6/01	"Saw Play Loh"	M	27	xxxx	Killing, torture, detention, forced labour
15	8/01	"Saw Mya Thein"	M	25	xxxx	Shootings, health
16	8/01	"Saw Yo Tha"	M	48	xxxx	Forced labour
17	8/01	"Naw Paw"	F	21	xxxx	Landmines
18	1/02	"Saw Myint Thu"	M	36	xxxx	Detention, torture, looting, landmines, forced labour
19	1/02	"Saw Bway Htoo"	M	59	xxxx	DKBA, torture, forced labour, looting
20	1/02	"Saw Lay Mu"	M	33	xxxx	Torture, travel restrictions
21	1/02	"Saw Meh Tee"	M	22	xxxx	Restrictions, DKBA, torture
22	1/02	"Saw Lu Doh Say"	M	57	xxxx	Torture, forced labour, DKBA
23	2/02	"U Maung Lay"	M	39	xxxx	Forced labour, education, extortion, restrictions, health, flight
24	2/02	"Naw Hser Paw"	F	43	xxxx	Education, forced labour, extortion
25	2/02	"Naw Tah Lay"	F	26	xxxx	Forced labour, extortion, demands for intelligence
26	3/02	"Naw Thu Paw"	F	43	xxxx	Forced labour, health, KNU
27	3/02	"Saw La Htoo Mu"	M	58	xxxx	Shooting, torture
28	3/02	"Daw Lah Zin"	F	48	xxxx	Forced labour, extortion, looting, restrictions, food security, detention, education
29	3/02	"Daw Kyaw Wah"	F	47	xxxx	Forced labour, demands, looting, forced relocation, demands for intelligence
30	3/02	"Saw Kyi Nu"	M	28	xxxx	Forced labour, extortion, destruction of property
31	3/02	"Saw Thaw Oo"	M	28	xxxx	Forced labour, torture, destruction of property, shooting
32	3/02	"Naw Lah Eh Mu"	F	53	xxxx	Forced labour, DKBA, health, education
33	3/02	"Saw Ba Ray"	M	26	xxxx	Forced labour, extortion, education, killing
34	3/02	"Naw Po Lay"	F	53	xxxx	Forced labour, DKBA, health, education
35	4/02	"Saw Ko Tha"	M	24	xxxx	Forced labour, health
36	4/02	"Saw Eh K'Lay"	M	39	xxxx	Detention, torture, forced labour, looting, demands for intelligence
37	7/02	"Naw Kyi Doh"	F	44	xxxx	Killing, health, military situation
38	8/02	"Naw Wah"	F	38	xxxx	Health, forced labour, killing, torture, looting, extortion
39	8/02	"Naw Ber Kaw"	F	52	xxxx	Food security, demands for intelligence, detention, rape, extortion
40	8/02	"Naw Kee Per"	F	44	xxxx	Travel restrictions, forced labour, torture, looting, children, looting, extortion
41	8/02	"Naw Kay Lah"	F	42	xxxx	Food security, general situation, forced labour, education, health, travel restrictions
42	8/02	"Naw Khu Kyi"	F	50	xxxx	Food security
43	10/02	"Saw Pa Aye"	M	28	xxxx	Forced labour, landmines, extortion
44	11/02	"Saw Pa Lah"	M	24	xxxx	Restrictions, forced labour, landmines
45	11/02	"Saw Po Po"	M	35	xxxx	Killing, forced labour, food security
46	11/02	"U Day Thein"	M	42	xxxx	Torture, detention
47	11/02	"Saw Eh Doo"	M	32	xxxx	Detention, torture
48	11/02	"Naw Wee Wee"	F	42	xxxx	Travel restrictions, demands for intelligence, torture, extortion
49	11/02	"Saw Ko Pi"	M	32	xxxx	Travel restrictions, torture
50	3/03	"Saw Ni Maw"	M	29	xxxx	Food security, forced labour, looting
51	3/03	"Saw Lah Say"	M	41	xxxx	Torture, forced labour, detention, health, killing, convicts, extortion
52	3/03	"Saw Bo Ghay"	M	36	xxxx	Education, health, IDP, flight, travel

						restrictions, extortion, military police, detention, torture, killing, forced labour, food, convicts, looting
53	3/03	"Saw Dee Kay"	M	50	xxxx	Food security, flight, extortion, forced labour, education
54	4/03	"Daw Lay Wah"	F	50	xxxx	Food security, education
55	4/03	"Naw Maw Thee"	F	20	xxxx	Food security, torture, killing, crop destruction, travel restrictions, forced labour, extortion
56	4/03	"Daw Khu Pu"	F	50	xxxx	Food security, crop destruction, DKBA, forced labour, extortion, children
57	5/03	"Saw Say Tee"	M	48	xxxx	Flight, refugee camps, torture
58	5/03	"Naw Hla Win"	F	?	xxxx	Food security, demands for intelligence, torture, shooting, forced labour
59	6/03	"Naw Bo Mu"	F	38	xxxx	Killing, torture, detention, forced labour
60	6/03	"Saw Tha Sein"	M	35	xxxx	Forced labour, torture, convicts
61	6/03	"U Mo Day"	M	40	xxxx	Forced labour, extortion, looting
62	7/03	"Saw Zaw Kee"	M	48	xxxx	Forced labour, looting, education, rape
63	7/03	"Naw Htoh Kee"	F	58	xxxx	Health
64	7/03	"Saw Cho Aung"	M	49	xxxx	Food security, education, health, forced relocation, restrictions, killing, detention, torture, forced labour, DKBA, extortion
65	7/03	"Daw Mu Lu Wah"	F	38	xxxx	Forced labour, demands for intelligence, torture, shooting
66	7/03	"Naw Tha Wai"	F	46	xxxx	Extortion, forced labour, health
67	7/03	"U Maung Shwe"	M	40	xxxx	Extortion, detention torture, killing, drugs, health, forced labour
68	11/03	"Saw Taw Lay"	M	50	xxxx	Food security, torture, forced labour, extortion
69	11/03	"Saw Kyaw Thu"	M	40	xxxx	Forced labour, looting, extortion
70	12/03	"Saw Soe Bee"	M	40	xxxx	Food security, forced labour
71	1/04	"Naw Than Sha"	F	53	xxxx	Forced labour, extortion, DKBA
72	5/04	"Saw Hsa Shwe"	M	46	xxxx	Food security, forced labour
73	5/04	"U Dah Lay"	M	65	xxxx	Forced labour
74	5/04	"Saw Heh Taw"	M	51	xxxx	Education, forced labour, DKBA
75	5/04	"Daw Paw Ghay"	F	52	xxxx	Forced labour, health, detention, killing, DKBA, extortion
76	5/04	"U Na Mu Thee"	M	59	xxxx	Forced labour

Interviews with Villagers from Pa'an Township

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Village	Summary
77	4/01	"Saw Hla Than"	M	37	xxxx	Demands, torture
78	4/01	"Saw Nay Min"	M	50	xxxx	Torture, detention, forced labour
79	8/01	"Saw Htoo Shwe"	M	40	xxxx	Detention, torture, shooting, forced labour
80	2/02	"Pa Chit Mu"	M	76	xxxx	Forced labour, KNU, extortion, taxes, restrictions
81	3/02	"Naw Hsa Htoo"	F	18	xxxx	Forced labour, rape
82	4/02	"Saw Ler Wah"	M	35	xxxx	Forced labour, landmines
83	1/03	"Saw Po Win"	M	37	xxxx	<i>Pyitthu Sit</i> , extortion
84	1/03	"Naw Ba Kee"	F	40	xxxx	Forced labour, detention, shooting, children, landmines, extortion, looting
85	1/03	"Saw Eh K'Noh"	M	57	xxxx	Food security, flight, forced labour
86	1/03	"Pa Kee Thaw"	M	60	xxxx	Forced labour, children
87	5/03	"Naw Sun Wah"	F	50	xxxx	Forced labour
88	5/03	"Saw Ter Kee"	M	?	xxxx	Detention, torture, killing
89	5/04	"Saw Thaw Min"	M	66	xxxx	Forced labour, food security
90	5/04	"Saw Kwee Tha"	M	56	xxxx	Education, forced labour, food security, DKBA
91	5/04	"U Lah Paw"	M	40	xxxx	Food security, forced labour
92	5/04	"Pa Hsa Ker"	M	70	xxxx	Taxes, forced labour, food security, looting
93	5/04	"Saw Loh Mu"	M	45	xxxx	Education, forced labour, DKBA
94	5/04	"Saw Tah Ler Kee"	M	61	xxxx	Forced labour, education, DKBA
95	5/04	"Saw Bee Lu Lay"	M	52	xxxx	Forced labour, demands, DKBA
96	5/04	"Saw Thu Day"	M	35	xxxx	Forced labour, DKBA

Interviews with Villagers from Thaton Township

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Village	Summary
97	12/02	"Naw Eh Th'Saw"	M	32	xxxx	Forced labour
98	3/03	"Saw Play Kee"	M	40	xxxx	Education, health, flight, food security, forced labour, children, torture, SPDC, extortion, looting
99	11/03	"Naw Tah Tah"	F	24	xxxx	Food security, forced labour
100	11/03	"Saw Aye Dee"	M	40	xxxx	Torture, DKBA
101	11/03	"Saw Wee Lee"	M	42	xxxx	Food security, torture, DKBA

Appendix C: **SPDC Military Units in Thaton District,** **2001-2005**

The battalions listed here have been confirmed by villagers, KNU intelligence, and other sources to have been active within Thaton District between 2001 and 2005, during the period over which this report is based. Most of the battalions listed here are not based permanently in the district but rotate in and out of the district on average every four months.

Southeast Regional Command

IB #24	IB #62
IB #51	IB #96

Light Infantry Division (LID) #44

IB #2	LIB #102
IB #8	LIB #104
LIB #1	LIB #118
LIB #3	LIB #207
LIB #9	

Light Infantry Division (LID) #66

IB #1	IB #80
IB #11	LIB #6
IB #14	LIB #10
IB #35	LIB #108

Military Operations Command (*Sa Ka Ka*) #9

LIB #374	LIB #377
LIB #375	LIB #380
LIB #376	

Appendix D:

Villagers Killed by SPDC and DKBA

Soldiers and Landmines

This is a partial list of villagers killed by SPDC or DKBA soldiers in Thaton District. The list includes villagers who were shot, stabbed, beaten, or tortured to death as well as any who died after stepping on SPDC or DKBA landmines. These killings have been described in the interviews and field reports collected for this report. Many of them have been corroborated by several different interviews and field reports. There are 55 people on this list who have been killed since mid-1999, but it is important to stress that this list is far from complete and that the real death toll may well be much higher, perhaps even double that shown here. This list does not include the hundreds of people who have died of starvation, disease or accidents caused by having to flee their villages or the actions of the SPDC within the villages. Under '**Twp**' (Township), **T** = Thaton, **P** = Pa'an, and **B** = Bilin. Under '**Source**', **FR** indicates Field Reports from KHRG field reporters and '**Ix**' indicates interviews with villagers, where '**x**' is the interview number used in the report. See '**Appendix B: Index of Interviews and Field Reports**' for a complete list of all interviews directly cited throughout this report. There are a number of interviews and Field Reports listed here that, while not quoted and thus not included in '**Appendix B**', provided valuable information towards the writing of this report.

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Home Village	Twp	Remarks	Source
1	Mid-1999	Thu Ka Bee	M	?	Kwee Lay	B	Shot in the leg by SPDC soldiers who surprised a group of KNLA soldiers in the village and opened fire. The SPDC soldiers accused him of supporting the KNLA and shot him dead.	I102
2	1999	Maung Nyunt	M	18	Kwee Lay	B	Arrested and taken away after portering by IB #51 and stabbed to death. The SPDC had intercepted a KNLA radio message which named him.	I102
3	8/11/99	Saw Maung Yee	M	34	Pwoh	P	While hunting birds with a homemade musket, he was seen by soldiers of IB #231 who opened fire with small arms and RPGs. Shot in the chest and killed instantly. Other villagers threatened not to tell anyone and given 2,000 K to bury the body.	FR4
4	Between 10/99 & 6/00	Thein Ko	M	35	Kaw Leh	T	Discovered by soldiers of LIB #357 in a field hut and accused of feeding KNLA and thus killed.	I103
5	Between 10/99 & 6/00	Htun Tin	M	46	Kaw Leh	T		I103
6	Between 10/99 & 6/00	Ka Na	M	56	Neh Paw Hta	T	Killed by soldiers of LIB #357	I103
7	Between 10/99 & 6/00		?	?	Neh Paw Hta	T	Killed by soldiers of LIB #357	I103
8	Between 10/99 & 6/00	Bee Kya	M	31	Ta Maw Daw	T	Accused by soldiers of LIB #357 of contacting KNLA and killed.	I103

9	5/00	Maung Tin Aye	M	?		B	The wife of a KNLA soldier who had surrendered to the SPDC accused four men of being KNLA. They were arrested by SPDC, but one was able to escape. The other three were buried in pits up to their necks and had their heads cut off.	I14
10	5/00	Maung Aye	M	?		B		I14
11	5/00	Kyaw K'Baw	M	?		B		I14
12	26/6/00	Saw Mo Aye	M	45	La Ko	T	These 9 villagers were arrested by LIB #9 and accused of hiding and feeding the KNU. They were taken to Pa Nweh Kla Army camp and buried up their necks for a night. The next morning they were forced to run through the fields and released but told that if another battle occurred within the next 7 days, they would all be killed. Fighting occurred 2 days later and 2 of LIB #9's men were injured. The villagers were rearrested and beaten to death.	FR5
13	26/6/00	Saw Maung Tin Aye	M	30	La Ko	T		FR5
14	26/6/00	Saw Na Ma	M	55	Naw Plaw Plu	T		FR5
15	26/6/00	Saw Maung Kyaw	M	40	Thayagone	T		FR5
16	26/6/00	Saw Pa Leh Say	M	30	La Ko	T		FR5
17	26/6/00	Saw Kyaw K'Paw	M	40	Ka Daw Ni	T		FR5
18	26/6/00	Saw Maung Tu Po	M	?	Maw Lay	T		FR5
19	26/6/00	Saw Kyaw Win	M	?	Htee Po Thay Yay	T		FR5
20	26/6/00	Saw T'May Htun	M	28	Ka Daw Ni	T		FR5
21	29/9/00	Maung Day	M	28	Ta Oo Kee	B	Accused of being KNLA and stabbed and beaten to death by SPDC soldiers. Two other men were also badly beaten.	I104, I105
22	26/3/01	Saw Pa Kya	M	?	Pwoh	P	This village tract leader was shot dead by IB #6 and DKBA under Moe Kyo. Afterwards they cut out his heart and liver and threw his body into a river.	FR6
23	14/5/01	Saw Htoh Kaw	M	60	Htaw Klaw Kee	B	Shot in his rice field by SPDC soldiers. He was shot in the abdomen, creating a large exit wound in his buttocks. An SPDC medic tried to treat him but there was nothing he could do. He died soon after.	I11
24	4/01	Kaw La Gay	M	?	xxxx	B	Shot by soldiers from LIB #107 while in a field hut.	I106
25	30/9/01	Kaw La	M	22 or 25	La Kyo Koh	B	Killed by landmine in his hill field laid by DKBA soldiers under Moe Kyo	I18, I107
26	11/01 or 12/01	Ma Yu Pee	F	16	Khaw Po Pleh	B	Shot in the abdomen and killed by SPDC soldiers.	I24
27	2001	Po Yay	M	?	Ta Oo Kee	B	Was sleeping in a field hut when SPDC soldiers arrived and opened fire. He fled wearing only short pants. He was shot through his left shoulder and in the buttocks.	I45
28	12/4/02	Pa Tu Ngeh	M	?	K'Wa Hta	B	Arrested by LIB #1 and tortured. He was then ransomed for a gun. Stabbed to death three days later he was killed when the ransom was not paid.	I108, I109
29	7/02	Pa Hla Shein	M	40 +	Ka Meh	B	These 6 villagers accused of sending rice to the KNU then buried up to their necks. Shot dead the next morning by SPDC soldiers.	I110
30	7/02	Maung Tin Aye	M	25	Ka Meh	B		
31	7/02	Maung Kyaw	M	30 +	Ka Meh	B		
32	7/02	Maung Shwe Lay	M	?	Ka Meh	B		
33	7/02	Maung Aye	M	?	Ka Meh	B		
34	7/02	Maung Kyaw Pi Tu	M	?	Ka Meh	B		
35	18/7/02	Po Kee Kay	M	47	Klaw Hta	B	Killed in the forest by SPDC soldiers. He was beaten and stabbed before being shot in the	I49

							head.	
36	7/02	Htee Po Loh	M	?	Kru Meh	T	Taken to porter for an SPDC Army column and disappeared. Relatives said he was killed during fighting.	I98
37	23/8/02	Pweh Htoo	M	42	Baw Naw Wa	B	Village head arrested and accused of aiding the KNLA. He was slapped twice in the face and then stabbed. He was taken away to porter but later disappeared and is presumed dead.	I111
38	15/9/02	Saw Than Aye	M	18	Th'Waw Pya	B	Killed by a landmine while portering for SPDC soldiers.	I43
39	15/9/02	Saw Plaw Kee	M	38	Th'Waw Pya	B	Killed by a landmine while portering for SPDC soldiers.	I43
40	9/02 or 10/02	Pa Wah Koh	M	?	Lay Kay	B	Arrested by the SPDC while ploughing his field and then executed.	I52
41	2002	Po Kheh Kyay	M	?	Baw Naw Po Kee	B	These 6 men have all been rumoured to have been killed.	I111
42	2002	K'Maw	M	?	Baw Naw Po Kee	B		I111
43	2002	Maung Aung Thein	M	?	Baw Naw Po Kee	B		I111
44	2002	unnamed villager	M	?	K'Wa Hta	B		I111
45	2002	unnamed villager	M	?	Klaw Hta	B		I111
46	2002	unnamed villager	M	?	Klaw Hta	B		I111
47	?	Maung Kyaw Yin	M	?	?	B	Killed by SPDC or DKBA and left in the forest.	I112
48	Dry season 2003	Pa Beh Yu	M	?	Ta Meh Kee	B	Arrested and interrogated by DKBA. Not satisfied with his answers, they wrapped his head in a tarpaulin and held him underwater until he drowned.	I55
49	25/3/03	Maung Hla Aye	M	20	Pwoh	P	Accused of stealing a buffalo and shot dead by soldiers of DKBA #333 Brigade.	I115
50	25/4/03	Pa Mee Per	M	?	Ler Po	B	Arrested with Pa Maw Kwee (#51) and another man and executed by IB #11. The fate of the other man is unknown.	I58
51	25/4/03	Pa Maw Kwee	M	31	Paya Raw	B	Arrested at his home. Was tied up, beaten, and slashed with a knife. Ordered to show IB #11 where KNLA were hiding before being killed.	I58
52	25/4/03	Saw Pa Eh Soe	M	28	Paya Raw	B	Tried to flee from IB #11 and shot dead. His body was later mutilated. It is quite probable that he was KNLA/KNU.	I58, I59
53	7/5/03	Saw Maung Kwee	M	?	Paya Raw	B	Arrested with three other villagers and tortured and interrogated by soldiers of IB #14. Unable to speak Burmese well so he gave the wrong answers and was taken away, tortured for several days and executed.	I113, I67
54	8/5/03	Pa Mi Per	M	38	Htee Si Baw	B	Arrested by SPDC soldiers and accused of being KNU and was later executed.	I75
55	17/9/03	Po Sheh Loh	M	22	Th'Waw Pya	B	Shot dead by DKBA soldiers from #333 Brigade. He was shot eight times and then slashed with a knife on his leg and back.	I114

Appendix E:

Villagers Wounded by SPDC and DKBA

Soldiers and Landmines

This is a partial list of villagers wounded or injured by SPDC or DKBA soldiers in Thaton District. These incidents have been described in the interviews and field reports collected for this report. Many of them have been corroborated by several different interviews and field reports. There are 138 people on this list who have been injured since late-1999, but it is important to emphasise that this list is far from complete and that the real number is probably much higher than that shown here. This list does not include the hundreds of people who have suffered illnesses or been injured in accidents caused by having to flee their villages or the actions of the SPDC within the villages. Under ‘**Twp**’ (Township), **T** = Thaton, **P** = Pa’an, and **B** = Bilin. Under ‘**Source**’, **FR** indicates Field Reports from KHRG field reporters and ‘**Ix**’ indicates interviews with villagers, where ‘**x**’ is the interview number used in the report. See ‘**Appendix B: Index of Interviews and Field Reports**’ for a complete list of all interviews directly cited throughout this report. There are a number of interviews and Field Reports listed here that, while not quoted and thus not included in ‘**Appendix B**’, provided valuable information towards the writing of this report.

#	Date	Name	Sex	Age	Village	Twp	Remarks	Source
1	8/99	unnamed villager	F	38	P--	B	This village headwoman was interrogated and then raped by an SPDC officer.	I115
2	26/12/99	Saw P--	M	30	K--	B	Soldiers of LIB #548 opened fire on him in his field without warning, wounding him in the thigh.	I116
3	5/00	M--	M	?	L--	B	SPDC soldiers opened fire on his village after a buffalo ran out, thinking that the KNLA was in the village. Wounded in the arm; no medical assistance was given by the SPDC.	I117
4	5/00	“Saw Play Loh”	M	27	xxxx	B	Beaten severely after being arrested by SPDC and accused of being KNLA.	I114
5	Mid 2000	Naw B--	F	18	P--	B	Raped by an SPDC Army soldier.	I119
6	8/00	“Saw Play Loh”	M	27	xxxx	B	Questioned by the DKBA about whereabouts of KNU and hit on the nose with a mortar barrel (same man as #4, but separate incident).	I114
7	8/00	Saw M--	M	?	xxxx	B		I117
8	18/9/00	“Saw Htoo Shwe”	M	40	xxxx	P	Arrested and beaten by DKBA under allegation of supporting the KNU. He fled when he couldn’t endure the beating and was shot once in the thigh and twice in the calf as he ran.	I79
9	29/9/00	Saw H--	M	23	xxxx	B	Accused of being KNLA by SPDC soldiers and beaten. The soldiers rolled over them and suffocated with water before being released. A third man was beaten to death (#21 in Appendix D).	I118
10	29/9/00	Pa M--	M	20	xxxx	B		I118
11	11/00	K--	M	?	xxxx	B	Accused of being KNLA by LIB #1 and slapped twice in the face.	I119
12	11/00	Pa K--	M	?	xxxx	B	DKBA told LIB #1 that his father was a KNU health worker. He was arrested by the SPDC and ordered to provide intelligence. He was stabbed and had	I119

							writing carved into his face with a knife and his stomach pounded with a paddy pounding pestle.	
13	11/00	Pa K--	M	?	xxxx	B	Arrested along with Pa K-- (#12), stabbed and had writing carved into his face with a knife and his stomach pounded with a paddy pounding pestle.	I119
14	11/00	Pa M--	M	?	K--	B	Arrested by the SPDC who wrapped their heads in nylon and then poured water over them.	I119
15	11/00	A--	M	?	K--	B		I119
16	11/00	E--	M	?	K--	B		I119
17	11/00	Saw L--	M	?	K--	B		I119
18	11/00	"Saw Mya Kaw"	M	40	xxxx	B	Detained and beaten for 10 days by the SPDC for being accused of supporting the KNU. Afterwards forced to porter for 5 days.	I113
19	2000	"Daw Lah Zin"	F	48	xxxx	B	Forced by LIB #546 to sit very close to a fire, then forced to sit in a river for one hour and then 'roasted' by the fire again.	I28
20	1/1/01	"Saw Dee Ghay"	M	50	xxxx	B	Arrested by the SPDC and detained in leg stocks for 3 days where he was repeatedly questioned about having a gun. Beaten with a rifle butt, stabbed several times, punched in the head and shot in the leg. He was held in the Army camp for 1 ½ months before being released.	I10
21	12/1/01	M--	M	30	xxxx	B	Arrested by LIB #107 and accused of working with the KNU. He was tied up, beaten, and his head was wrapped with a tarpaulin. Held for three days.	I120
22	1/01	M--	M	30	xxxx	B	Arrested by the SPDC while working in another village and accused of being a KNLA officer. He was tied up, beaten, and stabbed. Escaped while being taken to be executed.	I121
23	29/2/01	M--	M	36	L--	B	Arrested by LIB # 107 and tortured. He escaped after 4 days.	I122
24	25/3/01	"Saw Nay Min"	M	50	xxxx	P	These 3 men were arrested by the DKBA and punched, kicked, and suffocated to reveal the location of KNLA units. Later forced to porter for 2 days.	I78
25	25/3/01	Pa H--	M	?	xxxx	P		I123
26	25/3/01	Saw P--	M	?	xxxx	P		I123
27	28/3/01	"Saw Hla Than"	M	37	xxxx	P	Beaten 5 times with a piece of bamboo by a DKBA officer for the inability to give the demanded amount of thatch.	I77
28	20/4/01	"Saw Hla Than"	M	37	xxxx	P	Beaten by DKBA soldiers for not sending information about KNLA movements (same man as #27 but different incident).	I77
29	20/4/01	M--	M	?	T--	P	Boys arrested, punched, and kicked by DKBA. Beaten with a length of bamboo 3 or 4 times.	I124
30	20/4/01	Pa K--	M	?	T--	P		I124
31	4/01	Saw K--	M	31	T--	B	Questioned about a KNLA officer by SPDC and DKBA soldiers. Beaten with sticks and rifle butts for not giving the right answers. Soldiers shot at their feet and threatened to kill them and eat their gall bladders with alcohol.	I125, I126
32	4/01	P--	M	28	T--	B		I125, I126
33	4/01	Pa D--	M	?	xxxx	B	Arrested by LIB #107, tied up and beaten for 2 days. Two of his ribs were broken and he was badly bruised. His nephew was shot and killed (#24 in Appendix D).	I127, I128
34	12-5-01	Saw P--	M	18	H--	B	Arrested and beaten by IB #6. The villagers had to give 19 chickens and other items for his release.	I129
35	13/5/01	"Saw Ghaw"	M	30	xxxx	B	Accused by a KNLA defector of also being a soldier and arrested by the SPDC. He was interrogated and beaten.	I12

							His wife (#37) was also arrested and tied up. She was released the following day. He was put in a pit and kept for a further 4 days.	
36	14-5-01	"Saw Ghaw"	M	30	xxxx	B	Arrested by LIB #106 along with her husband (#35) and tortured before being released.	I12
37	14-5-01	Ma M--	F	26	xxxx	B		I12
38	6/6/01	"Naw Paw"	F	21	xxxx	B	Lost her leg to a DKBA landmine while walking on a path.	I17
39	3/7/01	"Saw Mya Thein"	M	25	xxxx	B	Shot 3 times when fleeing from SPDC and DKBA soldiers.	I15
40	15/9/01	"Naw Hsa Htoo"	F	18	xxxx	P	Punched 3 times during attempted rape by 3 DKBA soldiers.	I81
41	25/9/01	Saw P--	M	52	xxxx	B	These 6 men were arrested, interrogated, and beaten by DKBA soldiers under Moe Kyo. All were beaten with rifle butts and a length of bamboo and Saw P-- (#41) was also stabbed and had his face cut with a coconut shell.	I130, I57
42	25/9/01	Saw M--	M	22	xxxx	B		
43	25/9/01	"Saw Say Tee"	M	?	xxxx	B		
44	25/9/01	Saw K--	M	?	xxxx	B		
45	25/9/01	Pa L--	M	?	xxxx	B		
46	25/9/01	unnamed villager	M	18	xxxx	B		
47	25/9/01	Naw P--	F	59	xxxx	B	These 5 village heads were interrogated, kicked, and beaten with a length of bamboo by DKBA soldiers.	I131
48	25/9/01	Naw D--	F	30	xxxx	B		I131, I132
49	25/9/01	"Saw Lu Doh Say"	M	57	xxxx	B		I22
50	25/9/01	Pa H--	M	48	xxxx	B		I133, I134
51	25/9/01	"Saw Bway Htoo"	M	59	xxxx	B	Beaten by Moe Kyo of the DKBA and threatened with execution if he did not show him a KNU supply cache.	I19
52	25/9/01	"Saw Myint Thu"	M	36	xxxx	B		I18
53	11/01	Naw M--	F	?	K--	B	Hurt (possibly shot) in the elbow by SPDC soldiers.	I135
54	7/01	"Saw Lay Mu"	M	33	xxxx	B	Punched, kicked, and stomped on by IB #62 for not reporting KNLA movements while on sentry duty. Also beaten with a mortar shell and stabbed. He was not even on sentry duty that night.	I20
55	9/01	"Saw Meh Tee"	M	22	xxxx	B	Accused of being KNLA and beaten by DKBA.	I21
56	7/01	M--	M	?	K--	B	Slapped and punched by LIB #3 for being unable to find the KNLA.	I136
57	7/01	S--	M	?	K--	B		I136
58	10/01	P--	M	?	xxxx	B	These 2 villagers were beaten when the SPDC column they were guiding was ambushed.	I137
59	10/01	Pa A--	M	?	xxxx	B		I137
60	12/01	Pa O--	M	41	L--	B	Arrested and beaten by the DKBA following a KNLA ambush.	I138
61	2001	Ma P--	M	22	xxxx	B	Wounded by shrapnel in the chest and waist when the SPDC shelled his village.	I139
62	2001	unnamed villager	F	?	xxxx	B	Wounded in shoulder by shrapnel when the SPDC shelled her village.	I139
63	2001	"Naw Tha Wai"	F	46	xxxx	B	Hit twice with a rifle butt and choked by the SPDC after someone ran away from them.	I66
64	8/3/02	"Saw La Htoo Mu"	M	58	xxxx	B	Hit and kicked by an SPDC officer who then tried to shoot him 3 times, but the gun misfired.	I27
65	8/3/02	Saw D--	M	18	T--	B	Punched and slapped by LIB #118 because he was unable to speak Burmese and answer their questions.	I140
66	12/4/02	Pa Y--	M	?	xxxx	B	Arrested along with another man by LIB #1 and punched and kicked. Later freed to search for a gun as ransom. The other man was killed (#28 in Appendix D).	I141, I142
67	20/4/02	"Saw Eh K'Lay"	M	39	xxxx	B	Arrested, bound, beaten, and interrogated about the names and locations of KNLA soldiers. A gun was	I36

							put in his mouth at one point.	
68	23/2/02	Saw A--	M	18	xxxx	B	Accused of being a KNLA soldier by LIB #118 and hit, kicked, choked, beaten with a rifle butt, and had his head wrapped in tarpaulin and suffocated with water.	I143, I144
69	Early 2002	Naw H--	F	60	xxxx	B	She was ordered to find a gun and a walkie-talkie and threatened with a knife and hit in the head 3 times with a piece of firewood when she could not. Handcuffed to a house post overnight.	I145
70	6/02	"Saw Ko Pi"	M	32	xxxx	B	Was accused of helping the KNLA and beaten with rifle butts following fighting between the SPDC and KNLA.	I49
71	Mid 2002	unnamed villager	M	?	P--	B	Arrested by SPDC soldiers who stomped on their backs with their boots.	I146
72	Mid 2002	unnamed villager	M	?	P--	B		I146
73	7/02	Ma L--	F	?	xxxx	B	Accused of supplying rice to the KNU. Was slapped, kicked, and strangled by SPDC soldiers who also wrapped her face and poured water over it, burned her with a hot iron, and scalded her arm with boiling water (wife of #74).	I147
74	7/02	T--	M	49	xxxx	B	Accused of supplying rice to the KNU. Was slapped, kicked, and strangled by SPDC soldiers who also covered his face with a wet longyi to suffocate him (husband of #73).	I147
75	7/02	M--	M	25	xxxx	B	A landmine exploded near these two men while tending their buffaloes and they were accused by a passing SPDC unit of being KNLA. They were kicked and beaten with fists and rifle butts and later forced to guide the soldiers.	I148
76	7/02	Saw M--	M	23	xxxx	B		I148
77	7/02	unnamed villager	M	?	H--	B	These 2 porters were shot while fleeing. One was wounded in the arm and the other in the stomach. Both received medical attention from KNLA medics.	I149
78	7/02	unnamed villager	M	?	H--	B		I149
79	15/9/02	M--	M	40	T--	B	Wounded by shrapnel from a landmine while portering for the SPDC. Two other porters were killed.	I150
80	15/9/02	M--	M	42	K--	B	Wounded by shrapnel from a landmine while portering for the SPDC. Two other porters were killed (#38 and #39 in Appendix D).	I150
81	17/9/02	"U Day Thein"	M	42	xxxx	B	Beaten with a rifle butt, suffocated with a wet towel, and kicked in the face following an ambush while portering for the SPDC. Later stabbed twice with a knife.	I46
82	17/9/02	Pa N--	M	40	T--	B	Kicked by SPDC soldiers after falling under the load given to him to porter, breaking his ribs and causing him to lose consciousness twice.	I151
83	10/02	"Naw Wee Wee"	F	42	xxxx	B	These 2 village heads were beaten on their backs and heads by IB #8 for giving inaccurate information about KNLA movements.	I48
84	10/02	unnamed villager	F	?	xxxx	B		I48
85	11/02	"Saw Bo Ghay"	M	36	xxxx	B	Locked in leg stocks and punched 3 times in the chest for arriving late for his shift of forced labour.	I52
86	2002	K--	M	18	xxxx	P	Accused of being KNLA and was bound, punched, kicked, suffocated, beaten with a gun butt and stabbed repeatedly.	I152
87	10/02	Pa K--	M	?	L--	B	These 4 men were forced to porter loads	I149

88	10/02	Saw V--	M	?	L--	B	for the SPDC. One was beaten so badly	I149
89	10/02	Saw H--	M	?	L--	B	he was coughing blood and was unable	I149
90	10/02	Saw M--	M	?	L--	B	to move. Pa K-- (#87) has disappeared	I149
							and the other 2 possibly escaped.	
91	12/11/02	"Saw Eh Doo"	M	32	xxxx	B	Punched and kicked by an SPDC officer	I47
							for giving unsatisfactory answers during	
							interrogation.	
92	< 2003	"Saw Bo Ghay"	M	50	xxxx	B	Was kicked and punched during	I53
							questioning.	
93	1/03	Saw P--	M	?	P--	B	Beaten by soldiers of LID #44 for not	I153
94	1/03	unnamed villager	?	?	P--	B	informing them that the KNLA had held a	I153
							meeting in the village.	
95	1/03	unnamed villager	?	?	P--	B		I153
96	1/03	unnamed villager	?	?	P--	B		I153
97	1/03	unnamed villager	?	?	P--	B		I153
98	1/03	unnamed villager	?	?	P--	B		I153
99	2/03	unnamed villager	?	?	xxxx	B	Small child who had part of his buttocks	I154
							shot off when SPDC soldiers opened fire	
							on his house because KNLA soldiers	
							were in it.	
100	2/03	"Saw Play Kee"	M	40	xxxx	T	Punched, kicked and repeatedly hit with	I98
							a rifle butt when he complained of being	
							sick and asking to be allowed to return	
							home from portering. Five of his ribs	
							were broken and he was coughing up	
							blood.	
101	1/4/03	Saw M--	M	?	N--	T	Hit 3 times by IB #35 because he could	I155
							not speak Burmese.	
102	25/4/03	K--	M	?	xxxx	B	Detained and beaten after a neighbour	I156,
							had fled and was shot dead. Held	I157
103	25/4/03	Saw M--	M	?	xxxx	B	overnight and then released. Two other	I156,
							men arrested on the same day were	I157
							executed (#50 and #51 in Appendix D).	
104	7/5/03	Saw K--	M	40	P--	B	Detained and interrogated by IB #14,	I158,
							during which he was kicked and stabbed	I159
							in the chest with a knife.	
105	7/5/03	"U Maung Shwe"	M	40	xxxx	B	Detained and tortured for 3 days. Were	I67
106	7/5/03	Saw M--	M	?	xxxx	B	ordered to be killed by the commander	I158,
							but were released by another officer.	I159
							Another man was taken away and	
							executed (#53 in Appendix D).	
107	7/5/03	Pa M--	M	?	B--	B	Arrested and tortured by IB #14.	I159
108	7/5/03	Pa L--	M	?	B--	B		I159
109	5/03	Pa M--	M	?	xxxx	B	Arrested and tortured by IB #14.	I159
110	5/03	T--	M	?	xxxx	B	Arrested and tortured by IB #14 for	I159
							having a walkie-talkie.	
111	5/03	W--	M	?	xxxx	B	Arrested and tortured by IB #14 for	I159
							having a walkie-talkie.	
112	7/6/03	Saw T--	M	19	L--	B	Beaten by LIB #10 7 times and	I160
							demanding 2 chickens from him.	
113	6/03	Saw M--	M	?	xxxx	B	Suspected of contacting the KNLA and	I161
							was punched and beaten with rifle butts.	
114	1/7/03	Saw P--	M	?	xxxx	P	Accused of being KNLA and was	I160
							arrested and beaten by IB #1 and the	
							DKBA.	
115	26/8/03	Pu M--	M	56	K--	B	Arrested and repeatedly punched in the	I162
							face after the DKBA was ambushed by	
							the KNLA.	
116	8/03	H--	M	45	H--	B	Interrogated by DKBA #333 Brigade	I163,
							soldiers under Bo Tin Win. Punched in	I163
							the eyes, kicked, and had a gun put to	
							his head.	
117	22/9/03	Saw K--	M	?	xxxx	P	Arrested by DKBA soldiers under Bo Tin	I160
118	22/9/03	Saw K--	M	?	xxxx	P	Win and were strangled and slapped.	I160
119	22/9/03	Saw T--	M	?	xxxx	P	Then taken into the forest and beaten	I160
							and held underwater until almost dead.	
							Only released when one of the men said	

							that he had brother in the DKBA.	
120	9/03	Pa K--	M	50	L--	B	Was arrested by the DKBA and forced to	I164
121	9/03	M--	M	40	M--	B	show them where the KNLA was hiding.	I164
122	9/03	unnamed villager	?	?	M--	B	Was beaten with a rifle butt and	I164
123	9/03	unnamed villager	?	?	M--	B	threatened with being shot when he	I164
							couldn't. He was later beaten and	
							kicked.	
124	10/03	Pa T--	M	?	P--	T	Beaten by DKBA soldiers when they	I165,
							were unable to lead them to where the	I166
125	10/03	Saw M--	M	?	P--	T	KNU was hiding.	I165,
								I166
126	2003	Mugha D--	F	?	xxxx	B	SPDC hit her on the back 8 times, fired a	I167
							gun next to her ear, and tied her to a	
							coconut tree for not telling them that the	
							KNU had come to the village.	
127	2003	M--	M	?	P--	B	Tied up and beaten by SPDC soldiers.	I167
128	2003	Saw M--	M	?	P--	B	Hit twice by SPDC soldiers.	I167
129	2003	unnamed villager	F	?	P--	B	Hit by SPDC soldiers.	I167
130	12/03	Naw M--	F	?	K--	B	Beaten by DKBA soldiers.	I168
131	12/8/04	Saw T--	M	35	K--	B	Beaten by DKBA #333 Brigade soldiers	I169
132	12/8/04	T--	M	40	K--	B	when they were unable to show them	I169
133	12/8/04	M--	M	40	K--	B	where the KNU was hiding.	I169
134	12/8/04	Saw M--	M	40	K--	B		I169
135	1/9/05	Naw M--	F	38	xxxx	B	DKBA soldiers, lead by Than Htun,	I170
136	1/9/05	Naw K--	F	12	xxxx	B	opened fire on their house, seriously	I170
137	1/9/05	U M--	M	6	xxxx	B	wounding all four.	I170
138	1/9/05	Naw M--	F	46	xxxx	B		I170

"We work one day and eat one day. We can get food to eat if we can work. If we can't work, we can't get any food to eat. In this situation, the Burmese also force us to work. The Burmese [soldiers] fine us if we can't work enough for them. We are afraid of them so we have to do it. We don't have money to pay them. We don't have land to run to. As the Burmese say, 'We have no land to run to. We have no money to pay.' We can't do anything, so we have to suffer among them." - "Saw Wee Lee", a 42 year old villager from Thaton township, Thaton District

"They don't get enough food. The reason is because they have to do many kinds of work. Now there is a unit of Burmese encamped here. The second thing is that they can't have enough time to go and stay [in the fields]. We can't go in the early morning when we can only see our feet. They specified that we can go at 8 o'clock in the morning. We must come back at 4 o'clock in the evening. It is not easy for our villagers to work. They do not allow us to sleep in the field huts. The said that they would shoot us dead if they saw us in the field huts. We villagers are afraid and we don't dare to travel. Another thing is that the pigs and insects ate it. We don't go in the night. When we go in the daytime, they [the animals] don't come." - "Saw Taw Lay", a 50 year old village head from Bilin township, Thaton District

"They find food day by day. They can't think about any longer than that. They are satisfied if they can find food to eat day by day." - "Saw Hla Wah", a 40 year old Karen relief worker based in Thaton District



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