

# **UNCERTAINTY, FEAR AND FLIGHT**

## **The Current Human Rights Situation in Eastern Pa'an District**

**An Independent Report by the Karen Human Rights Group**

**November 18, 1998 / KHRG #98-08**

*Pa'an district forms a large area in the central heartland of Karen State. Much of the northeastern part of the district used to be under at least partial control of the Karen National Union (KNU), but after troops of the State Law & Order Restoration Council (SLORC) military junta captured the KNU headquarters at Manerplaw in 1995, they progressively exerted increasing control over the entire eastern part of the district. Pa'an district is covered by a large central plain in the west, bounded by the Salween River and the town of Pa'an, capital of Karen State, in the west and north and by the Myawaddy-Kawkaik-Kyone Doh road in the south. In the east of the district lies the Dawna Range, a line of mountains running north-south parallel to the Thai border which form a steep natural boundary. Currently the activities of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) are concentrated in these mountains. No longer trying to hold territory, they operate as a guerrilla force and regularly penetrate into the plain to the west. In its determination to gain complete control over all of Pa'an district, the army of the current State Peace & Development Council (SPDC) military junta is now trying to undermine the KNLA throughout eastern Pa'an district and the Dawna Range by intimidating the Karen villagers who live in the region, increasing their burden of forced labour, forcing them to move, and in some cases destroying their villages. The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), a Karen group allied with the SPDC, is helping them in these operations, and the villagers are facing an increasingly uncertain and desperate situation. Many are now fleeing their villages.*

*This report looks at the human rights situation for these villagers in eastern Pa'an district and how they are affected by the current activities of the SPDC, DKBA and KNLA. It looks in detail at specific issues of concern to the villagers, such as forced relocations, forced labour and the landmines which are now being laid all over the region by all parties to the conflict. The information is based on interviews conducted by KHRG monitors with villagers in and from the region between April and October 1998, supported by background information from previous research in the area by KHRG. For additional background, see **"Abuses and Relocations in Pa'an District"** (KHRG #97-08, 1/8/97), **"Interviews from Northern Pa'an District"** (KHRG #96-33, 4/8/96), and **"The Situation in Pa'an District"** (KHRG #96-17, 15/5/96).*

*The report contains this preface and an Introduction which summarises the situation, followed by a detailed breakdown of the situation into its various components, supported by many excerpts from interviews with villagers and a translated SPDC forced relocation order. It concludes with an index of the interviews used. The full text of these interviews is published separately in an Annex of approximately 80 pages, which is available from KHRG on request.*

*In order to protect villagers, all names of those interviewed have been changed and false names are shown in quotation marks; the names of some villages have been omitted. Some of the places referred to in the report go by several names; for example, the DKBA headquarters at Myaing Gyi Ngu is known in Karen as Khaw Taw, Pain Kyone township is Dta Greh in Karen, Nabu village is T'Nay Hsah in Karen, and the Salween River is Khoh Loh Kloh in Karen.*

## **Table of Contents**

Preface .....	1
Table of Contents .....	2
Abbreviations .....	2
Map .....	3
Introduction .....	4
Forced Relocation .....	7
Village Destruction .....	10
Killings and Abuse .....	13
Detention and Torture .....	15
Looting and Extortion .....	17
Forced Labour .....	20
Portering .....	23
Landmines and Human Mine Detonators .....	25
DKBA .....	29
Life of the Villagers .....	34
Flight .....	36
Future of the Area .....	38
Copy of SPDC forced relocation order in Burmese .....	41
Index of Interviews .....	42

## **Abbreviations**

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

## Introduction

*“Whenever they came to the village they’d find fault with the villagers, and after choosing a villager to blame for something they’d punish him by demanding money, like 10,000 or 20,000 Kyat. The first thing they’d do when they entered the village was to capture all the villagers, kick every man and accuse us all of being KNU soldiers. ...we had to go as porters for 5 days at a time, and if we didn’t dare go or if we didn’t have time to go we had to give them 3,000 Kyats. But even when we gave them these porter fees, we still had to run away to escape whenever they chased people to catch them as porters. ... if we get injured while portering in the jungle they never send us to the hospital or back home, they just shoot us dead. I know 3 people they killed that way. The Burmese soldiers captured us to be porters until we didn’t have enough time left to do our own work, so we could only get just enough to eat for ourselves, and then because of that we couldn’t give them the taxes and fees they demanded. We couldn’t grow or find food because they were always trying to catch us as porters, and then they even abused us when we were porters for them. ... If they run out of rations they take our rice to eat. Even if they see that you have only one big tin of rice they’ll take the whole tin; if they only see 2 tins, then they’ll take 2 tins. If we have no [milled] rice then they take the paddy from our storage barns. They never think of us. They eat the livestock until they’re all gone. They ate all of my chickens. We never get the chance to sell any of the livestock we rear, but still we have to give them money whenever they want it. We can’t even buy medicine when our children get sick because we always have to give taxes to them.” - “Saw Tha Dah” (M, 27), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #10, 8/98)*

The region commonly known as Pa’an District forms a large triangular area in central Karen State, bounded in the west and north by the Salween River and the town of Pa’an (capital of Karen State), in the east by the Moei River where it forms the border with Thailand, and in the south by the motor road from Myawaddy (at the Thai border) westward to Kawkareik and Kyone Doh. Pa’an District is also known as the Karen National Liberation Army’s (KNLA’s) 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade area. The western parts of Pa’an District and the principal towns have been controlled by the SLORC/SPDC military junta for 10 years or longer, while the eastern strip adjacent to the Thai border has come largely under their control over the past 3 years. The easternmost strip of Pa’an District near the Moei River is separated from the rest of the district by the main ridge of the steep Dawna Mountains. All of the villagers in this region are Karen rice farmers, predominantly Buddhist with Animist and Christian minorities.

As part of their program to consolidate control over eastern Pa’an District, at the end of 1995 the SLORC began using the forced labour of villagers to construct a large web of military access roads throughout the central parts of the district and along the western side of the Dawna Range. At least a dozen forced labour roads were under construction, northward from Kawkareik and Kyone Doh to Nabu, then on northwards to Tu Kaw Koh, Bee T’Ka and Dta Greh (Pain Kyone), and also linking the centre of the district with roads further west leading to Pa’an. In many villages, people were being forced to work on several roads at the same time. Then in late 1996, faced with continuing Karen resistance along the Dawna, SLORC began forcible relocations of many villages along the western slopes to Army bases and the forced labour roads. However, after SLORC troops based at Bee T’Ka, a village of 300 households which had been forced to move, were attacked by the KNLA and suffered heavy casualties, the villagers at Bee T’Ka and some other villages were ordered to return in order to provide a human shield for the soldiers. Some returned, while others fled into the hills of the Dawna. Many of the villagers on the western slopes of the Dawna in central and southern Pa’an District have been in this type of

situation for some time now, living at times in their villages until the abuses get too bad, then living in hiding for some time, then returning close to their villages if the SLORC/SPDC troops withdraw, and so on. For most of them it is an uncertain, nerve-wracking and unsustainable existence at best.

The KNLA still has extensive operations east of the Dawna and in the mountains themselves, while the plains further west are primarily controlled by the SPDC and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). On both sides of the Dawna range there has been continuous low intensity fighting, with some larger battles, between the KNLA and the combined forces of the SPDC and DKBA, and this fighting has intensified over the past year. Eastern Pa'an District is one of the KNLA's strongest areas of guerrilla activity, and the SPDC is determined to obtain strong control here. The most intense fighting this year has been in the area of the KNLA's 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade headquarters near the Thai border.

In southeastern Pa'an District, villagers are finding it more and more difficult to stay in their villages, and many in the area of Taw Oak, Pah Klu, Sgaw Ko, Kwih Lay and Meh Pleh Toh have already fled to stay in their farmfield huts or in the hills. In August, several hundred people from this area crossed the Thai border to become refugees. There were several reasons for their flight. Firstly, the SPDC and DKBA troops attacking the KNLA in Pa'an District are placing heavier and heavier demands on their villages for porters, and are increasingly using these porters as human shields and human mine detonators, forcing them to walk in front of the military columns to set off the mines being used intensively by all sides to the conflict in this area. The villagers can no longer afford to hire replacements to go as porters for them and they are terrified of the mines, so they have no choice but to flee. In addition, they are also being called on to do more forced labour maintaining all the new roads and at Army camps, as well as to build a new DKBA office in the border town of Myawaddy. The villagers are also facing an increase in looting and extortion by SPDC, DKBA, and in some cases KNLA troops; the SPDC has ordered its field units to obtain some or all of their food for themselves, and this is leading to looting and the use of villagers as forced labour to farm for the Army; at the same time, most of the rations given to the DKBA by the SPDC have been cut off, and KNLA units no longer receive much in the way of rations from headquarters. The villagers cannot afford to meet the food and cash demands of all three armies at once, especially when the lack of rains this year has destroyed much of their rice crop. Some villages also have an SPDC-imposed curfew of 4 p.m. and are not allowed to spend the night at their fields, which makes it difficult for them to farm. Finally, the DKBA called all village elders to a meeting in which they informed them of an SPDC order that all villages in the area are to be forced to relocate at the end of this year's harvest. They were very vague about where the villagers would have to go, but made it very clear that any who remained would become "targets for their guns". In August, some villages in the area were served with a relocation order from SPDC Light Infantry Battalion #104 stating that they must move to Kwih Lay by September 10<sup>th</sup>, after which "the Army will go around clearing the area and should any village or small huts in the paddy fields be found still standing, they will all be dismantled and destroyed." (See under 'Forced Relocation' below.)

Roughly 80 kilometres further north on the eastern slopes of the Dawna Range near the Thai border, the SPDC launched a military operation reportedly code-named "Aung Moe Haing" in August to wipe out several villages in the area and forcibly relocate the others. Some villagers started to flee in late August. Then in early September troops from Light Infantry Division #44 split into three columns of 100 soldiers each and burned and destroyed the villages of Meh Keh, Tha Pwih Hser, Meh Lah Ah, and Po Ti Pwa. In Wah Mi Klah village the villagers didn't flee, but the SPDC troops still burned at least one house, looted the village, killed the livestock and

took villagers to be porters. As a result, all the villagers in these and other villages in the area fled higher into the hills, and over 3,000 villagers fled across the border into Thailand. The assault troops have now based themselves in the area, so none of the villagers dare to return and have had to abandon their crops and most of their possessions.

In the northeast of Pa'an district, in areas just west of the Thai border near Meh Th'Wah and south of the former KNU headquarters of Manerplaw, many villages were systematically destroyed by SLORC troops 2-3 years ago after the SLORC captured Manerplaw and began consolidating their control over the region. Many of the villagers fled to refugee camps in Thailand, but returned after several of the refugee camps were burned and destroyed by SLORC and DKBA in 1995-96. They began rebuilding their villages on new sites which were further from SLORC bases than their previous villages, often giving the new villages the same names as those which were previously destroyed. In 1997, SLORC/SPDC troops harassed and looted these villages on occasion. In 1998 they stopped coming, but in April many people were already starting to flee the villages anyway, because given the general climate in Pa'an district they were sure that the SPDC troops based at Kler Day and other camps were about to start harassing their villages again. The KNLA had also retaliated for the SPDC/DKBA attacks on refugee camps in Thailand by attacking DKBA headquarters at Myaing Gyi Ngu twice, in January and March, and there was a strong possibility that the SPDC and DKBA would respond by destroying villages like these, which lie between Myaing Gyi Ngu and the Thai border. Since April there has been some limited fighting in the region, and the situation for these villagers remains uncertain and unstable.

The DKBA headquarters at Myaing Gyi Ngu (Khaw Taw), on the Salween River in northeastern Pa'an District, continues to exist and several thousand Karen families still live there. They remain because those who stay there only have to do forced labour for the DKBA, not the SPDC, and DKBA forced labour is generally milder and less likely to include beatings and physical abuse. Residents of Myaing Gyi Ngu cannot farm or eat meat; they receive a small ration of rice and occasional beans from the SPDC (families of DKBA soldiers get small quantities of oil and other condiments in addition). However, people there report that the quantities are not enough, and that the SPDC has told the DKBA that all food supplies will be cut off "after 4 years and 1 month"; calculating from the formation of the DKBA in December 1994, this would mean the end of 1998. If the SPDC follows through with this, Myaing Gyi Ngu would probably disintegrate and the DKBA would lose much of its access to a civilian support base.

Currently the DKBA has little support from among the civilians because their main activities are taxing and extorting money from villagers and helping SPDC units. Many of the villagers even refer to them together as 'the Burmese'. Most SPDC units in Pa'an district take small groups of DKBA soldiers with them to obtain food for them in the villages and point out suspects for arrest. However, there is little trust between the SPDC and the DKBA and the future of the latter remains uncertain.

For the villagers, the future is even more uncertain. Throughout the Dawna region they face the possibility of imminent forced relocations, they must constantly fear forced labour as porters and human mine detonators and they have no way to buy their way out of this labour. Anytime they work in their fields, if an SPDC or DKBA group approaches they have two choices: stand and be caught as a porter, or run and be shot at. Villagers continue to be routinely and regularly shot dead throughout Pa'an district simply for trying to run from patrols. Many have found it impossible to live in this environment anymore, and some of these have simply fled higher and higher into the hills while others have tried to flee to Thailand. Some who have reached

Thailand individually have been immediately forced back across the border at gunpoint, while some large groups have been allowed into refugee camps, though possibly only temporarily. Thai authorities insist that newly arrived refugees must be prepared to go back soon, because they are only allowed to remain if and while they are “fleeing from fighting”.

### **Forced Relocation**

*“They called a meeting of all the village headmen. They said that when we finish our harvest we must move to their place. If we don’t want to stay with them, they gave us the choice of going wherever we want to stay. The Burmese told the DKBA and then the DKBA told us. They’re forcing all the villages in Meh Pleh Toh area to move: Meh Pleh Toh, Sgaw Ko, Kwih Lay, Toh Thu Kee, all the villages. They want to force us out as soon as possible. They said that if we stay in our village, we will become targets for their guns, and if we go where they order, it will be to their place. ... If we went to their place we couldn’t do anything, we’d have to survive by selling snacks or something. I couldn’t do it. In my village I had a farm with fields. I had enough land to grow all our food every year. Now I want my field back, because if we can’t eat rice then we can’t survive. But this year I only had the chance to plant 2 baskets of seed paddy in my field. All of us who fled left many of our things behind in the village. Some villagers left their cattle and buffalos, because we fled in fear. All the paddy we had planted will just be taken by the Burmese. We just gathered what we could and came here, though my mother and father are still back in the village.”* - “Pa Weh Doh” (M, 47), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #14, 8/98)

Current SPDC practice throughout Karen regions is to forcibly relocate all villages which they do not or cannot easily control. This includes villages which they believe give food to KNLA units or where KNLA units simply pass through, villages which are too far from an SPDC Army camp to be constantly watched and patrolled, and villages which consistently fail to comply with SPDC demands for forced labourers and extortion money. As part of its program to consolidate control over Pa’an district, over the past 3 years SLORC and SPDC have sporadically conducted forced relocations in a few areas. Facing continued KNLA guerrilla activity based in the Dawna Range and penetrating westward into the plains, between November 1996 and March 1997 the SLORC forcibly relocated at least 10 villages along the western side of the Dawna to Army camps and sites along the forced labour roads, where the villagers were then used intensively for road-building labour. These villages included Bee T’Ka, Ta Ku Kraw (which was burned), Kwih Pa Taw, Noh Law Bler, Tee Hseh Ker, Naw Ter Kee, Kaw Per Nweh Ko, Kwih Sgheh, Tee Baw Blaw and Ler Dah, several of which are major villages; Bee T’Ka alone has 300 households. [For further details on these relocations see **“Abuses and Relocations in Pa’an District”** (KHRG #97-08, 1/8/97).] However, rather than undermining the KNLA, these relocations actually removed the ‘shield’ of Karen civilians from the SLORC troops, and after one particularly heavy KNLA attack on SLORC troops at Bee T’Ka, the Army began ordering the villagers to return to their villages. Many villagers didn’t dare obey, fearing intensified abuses, and scattered to towns or into the hills.

In southeastern Pa’an district there have also been localised forced relocations over the past two to three years in attempts to undermine KNLA operations in the area, though some of these have only been carried out temporarily or half-heartedly.

***“Last year, they only forced our village to relocate to Ker Ghaw. They gave us three days to go, but when we bribed them they allowed us to stay. We didn’t want to go so we collected money, 15,000 Baht of Thai money, and gave the money to them and they allowed us to stay one more year.”*** - “Pi San San” (F, 50), Taw Oak vill., south Pa’an district (Interview #18, 9/98)

However, forced relocation is increasingly becoming the cornerstone of SPDC military practice throughout Burma, and in mid-1998 the Army appeared to become much more serious about forcibly relocating villages in southeastern Pa’an district as well as those further north in the Dawna Range. In the southeast, the DKBA called all village heads in the area to a meeting in Ker Ghaw in the middle of rainy season, at which they announced an SPDC order that all villages will be forced to move to Kwih Lay, Sgaw Ko or Ker Ghaw as soon as rice harvest is finished at the end of this year. Villages which will be forced to move include Taw Oak, Meh Pleh Toh, Toh Thu Kee and other villages not directly controlled by the SPDC; the complete list is unclear, because some villagers believe that Sgaw Ko and Kwih Lay will be forced to move, while others believe that these villages will be used as relocation sites. At the meeting the DKBA stated that villagers will be able to move anywhere they want as long as they leave their villages, but that anyone who remains in the relocated villages “will be in our gunsights”. This time it appears that the SPDC and DKBA intend to fully implement the forced relocation. The reason they have given such early notification may have been to encourage the villagers to start moving out now, and this is having its desired effect. Many villagers have already fled Taw Oak, Sgaw Ko and other villages in the area while they can still choose where to go, rather than wait for SPDC soldiers to drive them out at gunpoint.

***“...both the Burmese and the DKBA said that after we finish our harvest they would force us to relocate to Htee Wah Blaw K’Waw Bu. They said that if we ran to the jungle they would sweep us up like a broom. The commander of the DKBA, Thein Shwe, said, ‘If we see you in the jungle when we come, you will be in our gunsights.’”*** - “Pi San San” (F, 50), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #18, 9/98)

***“I heard from some people that the Burmese and DKBA would build a camp between Pah Klu and Loh Baw, and that after 7 months they will order the villagers to bring all of their rice to the villages [from their paddy storage barns and field huts] and leave their villages. They said that the villagers can go and stay anywhere that they want to go in Thailand or Burma, but that anyone who won’t leave their village will be forced to go to Kwih Lay, Sgaw Ko or Ker Ghaw.”*** - “Naw Kler” (F, 21), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #10, 8/98)

***“They haven’t forced the villagers from Htee Wah Blaw to relocate, but I’ve heard that they will force the villagers from Loh Baw and Pah Klu to relocate to Htee Wah Blaw.”*** - “Pi Wah K’Paw” (F, 60), Htee Wah Blaw village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #20, 9/98)

***“They told us we’d have to move to a relocation place. They didn’t say where. They just said that after rainy season they’ll drive away all the villagers. So as soon as we had a chance we fled. If we’d waited until they drive the villagers away, it wouldn’t be easy to flee because then they’d keep us all under guard.”*** - “Naw Lah Say” (F, 25), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #12, 8/98)

Some of the villages in Myawaddy and Kawkareik townships of southeastern Pa'an District have already been served with a written relocation order from SPDC Light Infantry Battalion #104. A copy of the original order in Burmese as it was received by one village is included on page 41 of this report. The following is a direct translation of the order:

Line Light Infantry Battalion No. (104)	Front
Klu village	Pah
Ref. No. 104 / 02 / Oo 1	
Date: 1998 August	
To: Chairman	
<u>xxxx</u> village	
Subject: Order to vacate issued to the villages.	
1. Order has been issued to <u>xxxx</u> village to vacate the place and move to Kwih Lay village or to any other place where the villagers have relatives, at the latest by 10 <sup>th</sup> September 1998.	
2. After the date of issue of this order, it is warned that the Army will go around clearing the area and should any village or small huts in the paddy fields be found still standing, they will all be dismantled and destroyed.	
 [Sd.]	

(for) Battalion Commander

Front line, Light

Infantry Battalion No.104

*[Above order reproduced courtesy of the Health Workers' Union (Pa'an District) from their 19 September report on the situation in this area; a copy of the original in Burmese is reproduced on page 41 of this report.]*

Further north in the eastern Dawna the SPDC has taken a much more direct approach to forcing the villagers to move. In August they launched a military operation reportedly named "Aung Moe Haing" using troops from Light Infantry Division (LID) #44. The intent appears to be to drive the entire civilian population out of the area with little care for where they go. Villagers already began fleeing the area in late August; 1,500 villagers fled across the border into Thailand and others fled higher into the hills of the Dawna Range. Then in September, the LID 44 troops formed 3 columns of approximately 100 soldiers each and destroyed several villages (see



‘Village Destruction’ below), causing over 1,600 more villagers to flee into Thailand from Po Ti Pwa, Ma Oh Pu, Tha Pwih Hser, Tee K’Haw, Wah Mi Klah, B’Nweh Pu, Po Paw Lay, Meh Lah Ah Hta, Meh Lah Ah Kee, Meh Keh, and Klay Po Kloh. Refugees from most of these villages say they never received any relocation order, their villages were simply attacked without warning.

In other regions of Pa’an district, such as the Meh Th’Wah and Myaing Gyi Ngu areas in the northeast and the central plains west of the Dawna Range, there are currently no major forced relocations occurring. However, KNLA activity continues in these areas and could result in further forced relocations over the coming dry season.

### **Village Destruction**

*“They burned our village down twice, first our big village and then they came back and burned the new village we’d built in this place. Everyone ran to Thailand, or to the jungle and the mountains. Later we came back again but we’ve never been able to go back to our old village. We don’t dare stay there. We’ve had to live in the forest far from our village and move once every year or every two years. Kwih Law Ploh is also a new village, so is Pler Kloh, and over that way there are other new villages. We just built this village here and gave it the same name as our old village. We started building it here about 2 years ago. ... [Now] I’m not sure whether they will come to destroy our villages or not. If they are angry and do something bad to us we can’t do anything, because we are just villagers, not their enemies. We have to be afraid of many things.”* - “Pati Lah Say” (M, 43), Meh Kreh village, northeastern Pa’an District (Interview #24, 4/98)

Villages have regularly been destroyed by SPDC troops over the past few years in Pa’an district, particularly in and around the Dawna Range. In the Meh Kreh area in the northeast near Meh Th’Wah, SLORC troops burned and destroyed many villages when they first captured Meh Th’Wah from the KNU in 1989. Villages such as Meh Kreh, Kwih Law Ploh and others were burned again in 1995/96. The villagers in the area have now rebuilt smaller villages with the same names in slightly more isolated sites, but under current SPDC policy this isolation could make them even more likely to be burned once again rather than protecting them. Some villagers in the area have already fled to the forests due to their expectation of raids on their villages over the coming dry season.

The major destruction of villages so far this year has occurred slightly further south, about 100 kilometres north of Myawaddy in the eastern slopes of the Dawna Range near the Thai border. As part of the “Aung Moe Haing” operation to undermine KNLA activity in this area by wiping out the villages, Light Infantry Division #44 increased its harassment of villagers in August and then in early September sent columns to burn and destroy several villages. Three columns of approximately 100 soldiers each approached the villages from separate directions. In some cases, such as in Meh Lah Ah village, they first shelled the village from outside without warning. In each case all the villagers fled as soon as they knew the troops were coming, then when the troops arrived they shot livestock, looted the houses and then burned them. The first column burned some houses then moved on, then the second column passed through and burned more houses, and the third column repeated the process until few or no houses were left. First Meh Keh village was destroyed, then Tha Pwih Hser, Po Ti Pwa, Meh Lah Ah, and Noh Aw Pu. The 40 houses of Meh Lah Ah were completely destroyed as well as all the chicken sheds and other

outbuildings. The first warning that Meh Keh villagers had of the approaching troops was the sound of explosions as SPDC troops and their porters stepped on several KNLA landmines on Ghu Kee hill outside the village. The entire village was then burned to ash. Villagers claim that at the same time, SPDC troops also burned Tee Wah Klay and Tee Wah Blaw villages further west in the Dawna Range.

*“The Burmese came and destroyed the village. Two columns came separately, one from the east and one from the west. The total number of soldiers was 300 to 500. ... That happened about a month ago. ... When the Burmese got close to the village all the villagers fled into the jungle or to come here. We dared not face them. We came directly here. Some slept for one or two days on the other side of the river before coming here. When the Burmese entered the village, they didn’t see any villagers so they burned down all the houses except for one or two of the older houses. I think they burned our houses because they hate all people of our nationality. When the villagers fled they couldn’t take all of their belongings. Blankets, clothes and food were left behind. I left my chickens and pigs in the village and the Burmese ate them all. They ate the pigs of all the villagers.”* - “Pa Shwe” (M, 29), Po Ti Pwa village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #1, 9/98)

*“Three groups of soldiers came to the village with about 100 soldiers in each group. About 300 soldiers came to the village altogether. When the first group of Burmese entered the village, they burned many of the houses and then they continued on to another village. Then another group came and burned down more of the village. They burned down many houses in many villages. First they burned Meh Keh, then Tha Pwih Hser, then Po Ti Pwa, and then Meh Lah Ah village. ... They took the newest clothing from our houses and then burned everything else. They arrived less than a month ago, within the last 18 days.”* - “Saw Joseph” (M, 34), Meh Keh village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #2, 9/98)

*“We barely escaped, just after we ran out of the village a bomb exploded behind us in Meh Lah Ah. ... We didn’t even think to take our pigs and chickens. We could only take what we were wearing and a small bag.”* - Woman from Meh Lah Ah village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #3, 9/98)

*“We began to flee when the Burmese had arrived at Si Po Kee, which is to the west of Meh Keh. We heard from the Karen soldiers that the Burmese were going to come in the next month and clear our village. We didn’t how they were going to clear the village. When we heard the sound of explosions, all the people from Meh Lah Ah village fled. That was about 400 villagers. ... We had to run without our belongings. I had to leave my pots, clothes and livestock. ... By the time we had arrived at the Moei river only a short walk away, the Burmese were entering the village and started shooting their guns. We also heard the sound of large shells exploding. Meh Lah Ah has over 40 houses. ... They burned the whole village, nothing is left. They even burned the pig pens, the chicken sheds and the coconut trees.”* - “Saw Pler Hai” (M, 31), Meh Lah Ah village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #3, 9/98)

As soon as they heard of the troops destroying villages people from most of the other villages in the area fled as well, including Ma Oh Pu, Wah Mi Klah, B’Nweh Pu, Po Paw Lay, and Klay Po Kloh. At least one house in Wah Mi Klah village and one in B’Nweh Pu village were also reportedly burned down. In Tee K’Haw village a DKBA officer told the villagers not to run, that the SPDC would do nothing to them, so the Tee K’Haw and Wah Mi Klah villagers tried to stay. However, as soon as the troops arrived they began shooting livestock, looting, and capturing villagers to be porters, so all the villagers tried to flee; some, however, were captured and detained under torture or taken as porters. One 19-year-old girl from Wah Mi Klah stepped on a KNLA landmine as she was fleeing along the path and had her leg blown off. Now the SPDC troops have based themselves around the villages, at Meh Keh and at the pre-existing camps of Gka Deh, Kyi Ghay Kyo and Wah Bway Kyo; the last two are both within 15 minutes of Meh Lah Ah. They have reportedly already laid more landmines through the area, which was already

heavily mined by all sides in the conflict. The villagers have fled to the hills or to Thailand and don't dare return with so many troops around their villages.

***"The DKBA commander who was staying in the village, Pa Pa Nar, said, 'Don't run, stay in the village. If the Burmese come they won't do anything to you.' Then when the Burmese came they ate the villagers' pigs and chickens. If we had complained they would have shot us. We couldn't complain. There were only a few DKBA soldiers, about 50 to 60, but there were masses of Burmese soldiers, everywhere you looked you saw the green of their uniforms. The Burmese weren't afraid of the DKBA."*** - "Pa Li Kloh" (M, 21), Tee K'Haw village, northern Pa'an district (Interview #3, 9/98)

***"They came in the evening, more than 20 days ago. We didn't know when the Burmese were going to come. When they came to the village and passed by my house, the villagers who lived behind my house fled from the village. I couldn't flee. When the Burmese came, they called me down from my house and 4 or 5 soldiers stood surrounding me pointing their guns at me. They asked me if I had seen the T'Bee Met ["closed eyes", name used by the DKBA to refer to KNU/KNLA]."*** - "Naw Paw Htoo" (F, 45), Wah Mi Klah village, northern Pa'an district (Interview #4, 9/98)

***"They didn't burn down our village because there were many women still in the village and they wanted to steal their belongings. At first the villagers didn't flee, but they started to flee when the Burmese began torturing villagers. ... When we fled in that direction my youngest sister, 19 years old, stepped on a landmine and injured her right leg. She had been walking in front of me when she stepped on the KNLA landmine. I carried her to Meh Daw hospital and then the nurse there sent her to Mae Sot hospital."*** - "Pa Li Kloh" (M, 21), Tee K'Haw village, northern Pa'an district (Interview #3, 9/98)

***"They [SPDC troops] have already encamped on the side of the Meh Keh Toh river. It's not so far from my village, about 1 hour's walk. Now they've burned many villages. They burned down Noh Aw Pu, Tha Pwih Hser, Po Ti Pwa and Meh Lah Ah."*** - "Pa Shwe" (M, 29), Po Ti Pwa village, northern Pa'an district (Interview #1, 9/98)

Thus far the villages in the far southeast of the district, such as Taw Oak, Sgaw Ko and Pah Klu, have not been destroyed, but as noted above they have been told that they will be forcibly relocated at the end of the rice harvest in late 1998. If the SPDC and DKBA follow through with this forced relocation, it will almost certainly be followed by a spate of village destruction similar to what has recently happened further north.

***"We looked down on our village from a hill when we arrived in Thailand and saw that everything was yellow. We saw the smoke and fire from the burning houses because it wasn't far away. Nobody dares to go back there because there are landmines planted by the Burmese, the DKBA and the KNLA there."*** - "Saw Pler Hai" (M, 31), Meh Lah Ah village, northern Pa'an district (Interview #3, 9/98)

***"They burned my mother's house in Wah Mi Klah. Now she is staying in Beh Klaw refugee camp. She lived alone but wasn't in the house when they burned it."*** - "Naw Paw Htoo" (F, 45), Wah Mi Klah village, northern Pa'an district (Interview #4, 9/98)

***"I went back. I saw only ashes. I couldn't count how many houses had been burned but many had been, approximately 40 to 50. They also burned other small villages in the area."***

*They burned Meh Keh, Tha Pwih Hser, Po Ti Pwa and Meh Lah Ah. In the four villages there would be about 100 houses but I couldn't count them because everything was in ashes.*" - "Saw Joseph" (M, 34), Meh Keh village, northern Pa'an district (Interview #2, 9/98)

## **Killings and Abuse**

*"The villagers they shot were Per Talu and Pa Mu Dah [both men]. They were Taw Oak villagers. One was 15 years old and the other was 34. ... Four of us had gone to look for vegetables. On our way back, we didn't know that the Burmese soldiers had come to our village. They had already laid some landmines on the path, but none of us stepped on them. Then we saw the smoke of a farm hut that they had set on fire, but we thought they wouldn't do anything to us because we're only villagers. Suddenly we saw a soldier carrying a gun, and I knew he was a Burmese soldier. I started to run and he shot at me, so I fell down and lay quietly even though I wasn't injured. Then he shot at my friend and hit him, but he wasn't badly wounded and ran right on past me. Then the Karen soldiers started shooting at them, and the Burmese shot dead my other 2 friends. ... They took the bags of the 2 dead people and took some of their vegetables and the squirrels they'd caught to eat. Then they burned the bodies and the rest of the vegetables with some scrap wood. After that they laid landmines around the bodies, so that nobody would dare go to remove them. Later another villager went to the place where the bodies were, and he died because he stepped on one of the mines. After that the Burmese captured another Taw Oak villager and executed him too because they accused him of being a KNU spy."* - "Saw Tha Dah" (M, 27), Taw Oak village, southern Pa'an district (Interview #10, 8/98)

In Pa'an district there has not been a systematic hunting of villagers to shoot them on sight as has been going on since 1997 further north in Papun district (see *"Wholesale Destruction"*, KHRG, April 1998). However, over the past several years there have been continuous killings of villagers throughout the district, particularly in the east near the Dawna Range. In most cases, SPDC or DKBA patrols see villagers along pathways or working in their fields and call them over. The villagers know they will likely be taken as porters if caught, so their first instinct is to run, and then they are gunned down with no questions asked by the troops. If the villager is wounded, he or she is left where they fall or in some cases killed with a knife or bayonet. SPDC troops then report these as KNLA battle casualties. The number of villagers killed this way throughout the district is hard to estimate as most incidents go unreported, but is probably on the order of 5 to 10 villagers per month. Some are shot by the SPDC, some by the DKBA, but the villagers often make no distinction in these cases, referring to the DKBA as 'the Burmese' because they act in the same way.

*"Recently, the Burmese came to Htee Wah Blaw and shot at some people in their house. Five people were injured and one of their daughters died. Her name was Toh Kee [she was 6 years old]. It was [SPDC Division] 44 who shot her. One villager was injured in his bladder, another was injured on his leg and another was injured on his hand. After the Burmese from [Division] 44 shot them, they took them to Myawaddy and put them on trial. They accused them of being KNU, so they beat them when they interrogated them. They were actually just farmers. The injured people had to tolerate the pain of their injuries and also the pain of the beatings. In the end, those injured people were put in prison. Now they're still in prison."* - "Saw Tee Kaw" (M), Pah Klu village, southern Pa'an district (Interview #17, 9/98)

***“They also killed our 19-year-old son. His name was Saw Ler Htee. When he was going to get honey, the Burmese saw him and shot him dead. We heard the sound of the gun so we went looking for him and found his dead body. ... They’ve shot many of the people from our village. Maw Pay Aye, Pa May Klay, [both are men’s names] and many other people. This was happening many years ago as well as just now, when we ran here. They’ve just shot many villagers as soon as they saw them. That is why we don’t dare go back there.”*** - “Naw Paw Htoo” (F, 45), Wah Mi Klah village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #4, 9/98)

***“They shot and killed my uncle and my cousin at the same time. They shot dead my cousin Pa Mu Dah, he was 15 years old, and my uncle’s name was Per Talu, he was 30. Ah Klih was wounded too and his friend Maung Than was wounded in his arm, but they ran away. Ah Klih is 30 or 32 years old, and Maung Than is 20 or 21. All of them were from Taw Oak village except Maung Than, he is from Kwih Lay. In addition, Ah Klih’s wife stepped on a landmine and lost her leg. Her name is Mu Si. She is 22 or 23 years old.”*** - “Naw Lah Say” (F, 25), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #12, 8/98)

In villages, villagers are sometimes arrested and tortured to death or summarily executed, usually by beating them to death or with knives, for being suspected of helping the KNLA in any way, of being the local village liaison with the KNLA, or being a relative of a KNLA member. In as many as half or more than half of these cases, the villager is innocent of the charge. Sometimes they are accused because of a personal grudge, or another villager gives their name while under extreme torture simply to escape the pain. In Pa’an district it is usually the DKBA which points out suspects to the SPDC troops. In some cases villagers captured to be porters are treated as suspects and executed simply because they have difficulty carrying, or because they resist in some way. Villagers who try to stop SPDC or DKBA troops from looting their possessions, or who try to speak up for other arrested villagers, are also often threatened with arrest as ‘suspected KNLA’.

***“...they arrested people last year in rainy season [mid-1997]. Three people. Ah Ter, Ah Weh, and Saw Wih. Ah Ter was about 30, Ah Weh was 50 and Saw Wih was about 60 years old. They saw them on the path, and they shot two of them dead and beat the other to death with a rod.”*** - “Pati Lah Say” (M, 43), Meh Kreh village, northeastern Pa’an District (Interview #24, 4/98)

***“When they came to Loh Baw, they forced a villager from Loh Baw to be a guide for them. The KNLA shot at the Burmese along the way and the guide’s leg was injured, so he couldn’t run far. The next day the Burmese looked for him, and when they found him they shot him dead.”*** - “Pi San San” (F, 50), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #18, 9/98)

***“They came to Bu Law Kloh, Meh Kreh, and Meh Ko Kee. They came to capture some people, and some people ran away so they shot at them and some people died. They killed two people in Kray Hta. It is near the Thu Mwe Kloh [Moei River], near Meh Taree. Three months ago they arrested a man there and accused him of being KNLA so they killed him, but he was not KNLA. I don’t know his name, but he was just a villager. The SPDC killed him. So people didn’t want to stay there anymore, and some have gone to stay in the forest.”*** - “Saw Po Htoo” (M, 23), KNLA soldier in northeastern Pa’an district (Interview #23, 4/98)

Whenever SPDC troops are engaged in offensive operations such as forced relocations and the burning of villages, the frequency of random killings and killings under torture can be expected to increase. The latest operations against villagers in the Dawna Range have not produced much

of an increase in the number of direct killings because in most cases the villagers have managed to flee and avoid contact with the SPDC troops. However, as these campaigns continue and spread to cover more areas in the district and villagers are displaced for longer periods of time, the frequency of killings will probably increase.

*“They say that their soldiers go to the villages and don’t destroy anything and don’t eat the villagers’ animals. I want to tell how they ate my pigs and chickens, and they even ate my dog. They say that they don’t torture the villagers, but whenever they come to the village they shoot and kill the villagers. Last time they came they shot and killed the sons of Thee Htoo Mo. She had two sons, and the Burmese killed both of them at the same time. Their names were Pa Dah and Ka Taw Say. Division #44 killed them. They shot them dead on the spot. They just called, “Uncle, don’t run”, but her sons were afraid of them and ran and the Burmese shot them. ... First they killed my husband, then they killed my brother-in-law Aung Kyi and our Pastor, Thra Day Wah. They shot them dead in the river. ... I had 4 brothers and no sisters, but the Burmese killed one of my brothers when we was crossing the mountains. His name was Pa Deh Deh. They killed him when he was 23, they killed him together with a woman who was his friend. Her name was Naw Ka Nu, she was 25 with 3 children. Then this year at the same time as they killed my uncle, they also arrested her husband and killed him. His name was Maung Thaung Ngeh. Both of them died at the hands of the Burmese. Now only their three children are left.”* - “Naw Sghee” (F, 25), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #16, 8/98)

## **Detention and Torture**

*“When the Burmese soldiers came to the village they ate our animals and forced us to pay their taxes. If we didn’t give it to them, they came to beat us and torture us. When they came the first time, they beat a man in the village, tied his hands and his neck and cut his ears off. His name was Kyaw Bu. They beat and tortured him together with Pa Par Hlaing. Kyaw Bu is about 35 years old, and Pa Par Hlaing is about 30. The Burmese came with a young boy who had joined them, and he said that these two were Karen soldiers, but they weren’t. They are Taw Oak villagers. But they beat them, cut their ears off and tortured them in many ways. They beat them with the wooden pins we use to harness the bullocks to the yoke. They beat them in Taw Oak, then they took them to Ker Ghaw and the village headman went to vouch for them and secure their release. He had to give a guarantee for them and they also had to pay 5,000 Kyats for each of them.”* - “Naw Sghee” (F, 25), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #16, 8/98)

Village elders are constantly faced with demands to provide porters, other forced labourers, money, food and materials, and are supposed to regularly report on KNLA movements in their area. Whenever an elder fails to satisfy the SPDC in any of these roles he is usually beaten up or arrested, detained and tortured, sometimes to death. In some parts of Pa’an district the DKBA does the same to village elders who cannot meet their random demands for money, food and materials.

Usually when beaten or arrested the troops accuse him of being in contact with the KNLA, but the real reason is generally just a failure to comply with their demands. However, in many cases there is no way the elder could possibly meet their demands; many villages simply no longer have the money or food to continue supplying the SPDC, DKBA and KNLA all at once. Many SPDC units receive few or no rations anymore, and have been ordered to take their food from the

villagers; the DKBA long ago lost the cash salaries they received from SLORC, and many of their units no longer receive food either, while some of their officers only joined so that they could demand things from the villagers; and most KNLA units have lost their supply lines and demand all their food from villagers. All of this is happening at a time when the lack of rains has caused a dismal rice crop throughout the district. The inability to meet demands, particularly those of the SPDC and DKBA, is now causing many village elders to flee their villages in fear of arrest and ordinary villagers to flee in fear that their entire village will be punished.

***“The Burmese stayed close to the village, and if the headman didn’t go to report the Burmese would arrest him and put him in prison. The Burmese didn’t really have a prison, it was a cell where they kept the headman in stocks. One time the headman had to stay in that cell for 6 months.”*** - “Pa Ler Wah” (M, 30), Kaw B’Naw village, Pa’an district (Interview #33, 8/98)

***“The Burmese tortured the village headman from Klay Po Kloh village, his name is Po Ghay Wah. They put him in handcuffs and beat him, and they interrogated him at the same time. They tortured him very badly because they said that he was in contact with the KNLA soldiers. ... The Burmese beat him very badly. They held him captive for 10 days. They covered his face and tied his hands behind his back and made him follow them. He was bound during the nights as well. They didn’t give him enough rice. They gave him food only once a day.”*** - “Saw Ghay Htoo” (M), Wah Mi Klah village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #4, 9/98)

Many ordinary villagers are also arrested, detained and tortured on suspicion of being in contact with the KNLA or related to KNLA or KNU members. These suspicions are often unfounded and based on any random accusation by another villager or by a DKBA or SPDC soldier who is eager to impress his officer. Villagers arrested in this way can face summary execution, indefinite periods of detention without formal charge at army camps with forced labour and torture, or indefinite forced labour as a frontline porter. Even after the troops realise that the villager or elder is innocent, they will generally not release them until a village headman or Buddhist monk ‘vouches’ for them, meaning he guarantees the prisoner’s innocence with his life, and an expensive bribe is paid. The families of detained villagers usually have to borrow up to 20,000 or 30,000 Kyats from relatives and other villagers to pay for the person’s freedom, and then face years of debt trying to pay the money back.

***“The name of the [DKBA] soldier who captured me was Neh Pa Htaw from Battalion 999. He came with 20 other soldiers and they tied me up with handcuffs and ropes. They tied me around the neck, feet and waist. I was tied all over my body. They thought I was a member of the KNU. I was the only one they captured, and they took me to Kway Sha. At Kway Sha I was kept in a cattle pen with a thatch roof. I had to stay there on top of the cattle dung. ... I had to stay in the lockup there and I had to cut and remove stumps during the day, every day. At night time I had to go back in my cell. They guarded me and forced me to work very hard. Of course, there were some SPDC people among those who forced me to work. I was forced to carry ammunition as a porter, and it weighed more than 2 mer [32 kg / 69 pounds]. ... They didn’t give me enough rice to eat. They gave me food twice a day but the rice was not good, it was old and had been eaten by insects.”*** - “Saw Tee Kaw” (M), Pah Klu village, southern Pa’an district, who was held prisoner for 3 months by DKBA and SPDC, though he is only a villager (Interview #17, 9/98)

***“It wasn’t long ago, no more than a month ago. ... They [SPDC troops] beat me and Hsah Ku together. They hit me until my nose and ears were bleeding. I couldn’t hear for a long time.***



*They beat me with bamboo as big as this, until the bamboo broke. They also beat Hsah Ku in the back one or two times. Then one of them called me to go out into the forest so they could shoot me dead. They ordered a man to shoot me dead, and he tied me up tightly and then made me sit on a paddy dyke. The Burmese beat me a few times and kicked me off the paddy dyke - it was very high, as high as your waist, and I fell and hurt my head on the ground. Then they picked me up and slammed my head against the ground again. ... Then they found 3 guns, and after they found them they tied me up to a betelnut tree and beat me. They hit my head against the tree until my head was bleeding, and then they set me free.” - “Saw Kaw Doh” (M, 19), villager from just outside Myaing Gyi Ngu describing how SPDC troops tortured him while trying to find hidden KNLA guns; this incident caused him to flee and join KNLA (Interview #31, 4/98)*

*“They made a pregnant woman from Po Ti Pwa village follow them. She also carried her daughter on her back. They took her to Maw Po Kay. They held her there for 17 or 18 days but they have released her already. The Burmese saw her making alcohol and they took her to follow them. I don’t know what they did with her and I didn’t ask her about what they had done. We have to be afraid of them.” - “Naw Paw Htoo” (F, 45), Wah Mi Klah village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #4, 9/98)*

*“Then they told me, ‘Mother, if you say to us that she is the wife of a KNU, we will tie her up and force her to look for her husband.’ I whispered in my heart, ‘Oh my God!’” - “Pi Hser Mo” (F, 50+), Pah Klu village, southern Pa’an district, describing her interrogation by SPDC troops about a friend of hers (Interview #19, 9/98)*

## **Looting and Extortion**

*“If we stay there we have no money to buy food. We had to find one Kyat or two Kyats, then use it to buy food, but whenever they asked for money we had to give it to them. The Burmese demanded money as taxes. We’d earn money for food but then we couldn’t buy any because we had to give it all to them, 2,000 Kyat, 3,000 Kyat, sometimes 4,000 or 5,000 Kyat every month. If we couldn’t pay them they threatened that they would come to burn our houses, drive us out of the village or do many other bad things.” - “Naw Lah Say” (F, 25), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #12, 8/98)*

In some areas, extortion of money, food and materials, particularly by SPDC and DKBA troops, has become so intensive that it is causing people to flee their villages. This is especially prevalent in southeastern Pa’an district, in the area of Pah Klu. For some time now DKBA troops have lost their material support from the SPDC and have been forced to live off the villagers, and now SPDC troops throughout Burma are receiving rations only sporadically, in some areas not at all. KNLA troops are also living off the villagers at present. This has led to a general increase in the looting of villagers’ rice, livestock and belongings, demands for money, and forced labour on projects to grow food and make money for SPDC Army units.

*“The villagers who had to pay the taxes told me they had to give 400 Kyats to the KNU, 12,000 Kyats to the DKBA and 12,000 Kyats to the Burmese.” - “Pi Hser Mo” (F, 50+), Pah Klu village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #19, 9/98)*

*“They asked me for money but I had no money because I was just a farmer. I only had money sometimes when I hired myself out to work. If I couldn’t give them money they said they’d hit*

***me and kill me. So I had to borrow some money from another villager. If I couldn't find the money, I had to go as a porter for them.*** - "Saw Tee Kaw" (M), Pah Klu village, southern Pa'an district, describing extortion by SPDC troops (Interview #17, 9/98)

In southeastern Pa'an district villagers are facing increasingly frequent demands for porters, and must pay several thousand Kyats each time they want to avoid going; they are so afraid of being used as human mine detonators that they pay whenever they can. Now the SPDC in Pah Klu area have told villagers in Taw Oak that each family will have to pay them 700 Kyats per month in extortion money, over and above fees to avoid forced labour. Villagers in the area are also forced to provide bullock carts and teams for the SPDC troops, boats on occasion, rice and other food, and SPDC patrols regularly take or kill their livestock at will with no compensation. Whenever troops take or kill a valuable animal like a pig, after they leave the villagers must gather money together to compensate the animal's owner, and some cannot even afford to keep contributing to this so they have had to flee their villages.

***"The villagers have to suffer because there is nowhere they can go that's safe. They have to give money anytime the village headman collects money. Sometimes the DKBA or the Burmese come and eat the villagers' pigs, and then the villagers must gather money to reimburse the owners of the animals after the Burmese or DKBA leave the village. The villagers must pay for anything that is eaten, but they cannot afford to."*** - "Pi Wah K'Paw" (F, 60), Htee Wah Blaw village, southern Pa'an district (Interview #20, 9/98)

***"We couldn't stay in our village because of the Burmese and the Ko Per Baw. Whenever they came to our village they forced us to go with them, and if we didn't dare to go we had to give them money. If we didn't have any money to give, we had to go. They asked for porter fees of 5,000 Kyats for one trip [to avoid going as a porter] and one trip is for 5 days. Now they've started forcing us to pay 700 Kyats [per family] every month. Our family can't pay that much every month, so we had to come here."*** - "Naw Kler" (F, 21), Taw Oak village, southern Pa'an district (Interview #10, 8/98)

***"They ate the animals of the villagers and they drank when they were in the villages. They often threatened the villagers with their guns. They aimed their guns at the villagers and said, 'If you won't give me what I am asking for, I will kill you.' I was carrying their bags at that time."*** - "Saw Tee Kaw" (M), Pah Klu village, southern Pa'an district, describing what he saw SPDC troops doing while he was a porter (Interview #17, 9/98)

Earlier this year, the DKBA held a meeting in the area and stated that they will build a new office in Myawaddy town, then ordered all villagers to cut logs and do forced labour building the office or pay 3,000 Kyat per family. All of these demands come at a time when villagers have already sold all their belongings to pay previous demands and are suffering a bad year for their rice crop because of the lack of rain early in the growing season. At the same time, they also continue to have to hand over rice to KNLA units in the area. They are just not capable of supplying all sides at once. In the Pah Klu area, the last straw for many villagers has come in the last few months. The KNLA hijacked a group of boats moving SPDC rations upriver for the SPDC camp at Pah Klu. In retaliation, the SPDC unit forced the villagers in the area to hand over what they said was the cash equivalent for the full value of the rations. When a second shipment came, the SPDC forced the villagers to carry the rations from the boats overland to the Army camp without military escort, so the rations were hijacked by the KNLA again. The SPDC has now demanded the full price of their rations yet again, and the villagers simply cannot pay so many have fled.

***“We can’t dare stay in our village anymore. We couldn’t stay because of the taxes. Sometimes 2,000 Kyats, sometimes 4,000 Kyats. They kept telling us that the KNU had taken their rice so they forced the villagers to give money for their rice. We didn’t know anything about it, but we had to give this money whenever the village headman came to ask for taxes. I couldn’t pay anymore, so we couldn’t dare to stay. We couldn’t plant our fields so we don’t have any money.”*** - “Saw Kweh” (M, 31), Thay Maw Gu village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #9, 8/98)

***“I do not know what to do now. I am tired because the Burmese order me to go to them very often. We villagers have to pay money again for the food that the KNLA soldiers have taken. I do not know how we can do this.”*** - letter from a village medic in southern Pa’an District who has to act as a liaison with the SPDC Army because the village headman already fled and no one else will take the job

Further north in the Meh Lah Ah area of the Dawna Range where the SPDC is destroying villages, people are used to staying clear of SPDC troops, and the troops are more on the defensive militarily so they are not as free to spend their time making extortion demands on the villages. However, now that they are clearing the villages and destroying some of them, they have looted everything they can find at once. Villagers who have fled villages in this area say that the first act of the LID 44 troops on entering their villages in September was to shoot livestock and loot everything they could find in the houses. In some cases soldiers even stole some of the roofing and the walls of people’s houses to use at their camps, then burned the remains of the houses. Villagers in this area had little to start with, and now they have nothing at all to go back to.

***“When the Burmese came they ate our pigs and chickens. When I complained they poked me with their gun and looked at me threateningly. They shouted at me in Burmese. They took everything, even the women’s underwear. They took everything from me, there was nothing left in my house. They said they would take the wood off my house and build their camp on the hill.”*** - “Pa Li Kloh” (M, 21), Tee K’Haw village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #3, 9/98)

In the west of Pa’an district and in the north along the Salween River, there is less KNLA activity so the villagers do not have to supply the KNLA, but they face more systematic looting and extortion by SPDC and DKBA troops similar to that which is going on in the southeast of the district. All roads throughout the district have regular SPDC and DKBA checkpoints, at which everyone passing has to pay. Between Kawkareik and the border town of Myawaddy, the DKBA even runs its own passenger car service, and passengers who pay to ride on their cars have to pay less at the checkpoints. In central Pa’an district, even as villagers were being forced to work on the road network over the past 3 years they were also forced to pay “road building fees” which were supposedly toward the cost of building the roads. On the Salween River, a major new bridge was just completed in early 1998 at Myaing Galay, just upriver from Pa’an. Every family in all of Pa’an township had to pay “people’s contribution” of 25 Kyats toward this bridge, much of which was most likely just taken as profit by local authorities and military commanders. Now the SPDC has started construction on a new bridge over the Gyaing River, and will likely be demanding money from everyone in the region once again.

***“My parents-in-law have a fish pond, and every time they catch their fish they have to give some to the Burmese. The Burmese heard the sound of the pump whenever we drained the***

*water from the pond, and then if we didn't send them some fish they started firing off their guns. When they asked for our fish we had to give them all the biggest ones.”* - “Naw Ghay Wah” (F, 31), Pay Yay village, western Pa'an district (Interview #34, 9/98)

*“We had to give money for the Khoh Loh Kloh [Salween River] bridge at Myaing Galay [upriver from Pa'an] until it was finished last dry season, but we didn't have to go to build it. I think they got a lot of money for that bridge, because many families in many villages had to pay for it. Every family had to give 25 Kyats for it, in every village in Pa'an township.”* - “Pa Ler Wah” (M, 30), Kaw B'Naw village, Pa'an district (Interview #33, 8/98)

*“Division 22. They had a camp at Shwe Pyi Daun, near Ain Du. They said they came to defend the village, but they stole things in the village. They gave guns to people who they trusted, people who were bold and dared to steal, then forced them to steal. They found these people in other villages and then sent them to our village to steal. They hired those people to steal for them. I don't know how much they had to pay to hire a thief.”* - “Naw Ghay Wah” (F, 31), Pay Yay village, western Pa'an district (Interview #34, 9/98)

Throughout Pa'an district, and particularly in the east, farmers are already struggling to survive and many are having to flee because they find that they can no longer survive. If the looting and extortion, particularly by the SPDC and DKBA, continue at their current rate or increase, almost no one will be able to survive there anymore.

## **Forced Labour**

*“They forced the villagers to work very hard. They forced the old and the young, the big and the small villagers to work for them. The villagers had to work in the rain, in the sun and at night. If the DKBA came they had to work for them, and if the Burmese came they had to work for the Burmese. ... The villagers had to carry the rations and rice of the Burmese and the DKBA whenever their rations came. The villagers had to go to Kway Sha and Meh Pleh to get their rations. The soldiers had a boat but they didn't use it, they used the people to carry things instead. ... Similarly, they have a backhoe but they don't use it for road construction. Instead they force the people to labour on the road construction. So the villagers have to dig the mud with their bare hands to build the roads. There were many women and children doing road work.”* - “Saw Tee Kaw” (M), Pah Klu village, southern Pa'an district (Interview #17, 9/98)

The locations and types of all the forced labour which is ongoing in Pa'an district would be too numerous to mention here. In 1995 and 1996, the most common forced labour in the region was road construction, building and upgrading a network of roads from Kawkareik and Kyone Doh to Nabu, Nabu to Bee T'Ka and Pain Kyone, Nabu to Pata, Nabu to Daw Lan and Kyaw Ywa, Pain Kyone to Pa'an, Shwegun to Myaing Gyi Ngu and others. Now many of these roads have reached some level of completion, but they are only dirt and large parts of them are rebuilt by forced labour each year after they are ruined by the rains. Villagers also have to do forced labour clearing the scrub on the roadsides to minimise the chance that the KNLA can mine or ambush the road, and standing sentry on the roads by night. This provides constant shifts of forced labour for villagers throughout central Pa'an district, which they must do in addition to all the other kinds of forced labour.

***“I saw. Many people were doing it. There were children, men, women and old people. They were all building the road. They were clearing the road, also carrying rocks and placing them alongside the road. They were forced labourers. I saw it along the road from Pa’an to Myaing Gyi Ngu, and also along the road from Myawaddy to Pa’an. Also in Kawkareik, right in the town.”*** - “Saw Ghay Htoo” (M, 20+), human rights monitor who visited Myaing Gyi Ngu (Interview #30, 4/98)

***“...people have to cut bamboo for them and then they sell it. They do that in Klaw K’Dee. They also force people to build fences for them. They force all the villagers who are near them to work for them. The villagers have to do sentry duty along the road to protect the SPDC Army from KNLA landmines and to prevent the road from being destroyed by the KNLA. They will kill the villagers or force them all to move to other places if any of their soldiers are hurt by landmines.”*** - “Saw Po Htoo” (M, 23), KNLA soldier in Meh Th’Wah township (Interview #23, 4/98)

As well as the roads, there are major projects which villagers have had to do forced labour on, particularly the bridge across the Salween River at Myaing Galay, which was completed earlier this year, and the current bridge now being built across the Gyaing River. There are also smaller scale projects on which the villagers are forced to work; for example, the DKBA recently announced that they will build a new office in the border town of Myawaddy, and that all villagers in the Pah Klu/Ker Ghaw area will have to do forced labour building the office and supplying all the building materials; any family that wants to be exempted must pay 3,000 Kyats. On all of these types of projects, as well as for military porters, the villagers must not only do the labour but must also pay “fees” which are supposedly to cover material costs and hire labourers; however, the labourers are never paid and the materials are often demanded from the villagers, so the money is simply taken by the military and local authorities. The villagers must also provide all their own food and tools.

***“When they built the Salween bridge [a large bridge over the Salween River at Myaing Galay, not far upriver from Pa’an], the villagers had to go to dig earth and put it on the road to raise the road to the level of the bridge. The villagers had to walk there. Every house in the village had to send one person three times a month. They went for two days at a time and had to take along their own rice and other food. ... Villagers who couldn’t go had to hire someone to go for them for 1,500 Kyats. They have no choice, they must go. Some villagers who only had small children [none old enough to go for forced labour] had to leave their farms and hire people to tend their farms for them so that they could go themselves to do forced labour. It was cheaper to hire someone to tend their farm than to hire someone to do forced labour in their place.”*** - “Naw Ghay Wah” (F, 31), Pay Yay vill., western Pa’an dist. (Interview #34, 9/98)

***“Both DKBA and the Burmese held the meeting. The DKBA said that the villagers must come back and join together to help the DKBA to build their office in Myawaddy. To build the DKBA office the villagers must go to help them cut the logs and build the office, and anyone who cannot go to help must give money. Nobody can get out of it. The villagers who can’t go must give 3,000 Kyats each. If we can’t give that money, the DKBA or the Burmese will come to capture us. I don’t have enough money to pay all these things, so I can’t dare stay there. ... I came to stay here over 10 days ago.”*** - “Saw Kaw Ghay” (M, 31), villager from Myawaddy township now internally displaced (Interview #6, 8/98)

Villagers throughout the district, and particularly in its eastern regions and the Dawna Range, must also do forced labour as servants for Army camps. They are ordered to provide building

materials and go to the camps on rotating shifts to cut firewood, carry water, build barracks, bunkers, fences and trenches and act as messengers and guides. Usually the local Army officer orders the village elders to provide certain numbers of people on rotating shifts for this kind of labour, and the villagers must divide the work among themselves. If they fail to comply, the village head is usually detained and tortured, and their village may be labelled a 'KNU village' and be forced to relocate or destroyed.

***“Mostly they arrested people as they were coming into Kawkareik. They arrested visitors to the town [to be porters]. They also forced the villagers from Kawkareik to do forced labour for 7 days each month. They still force the villagers to carry rice and water to their camp. They force the villagers there to do all kinds of work, whatever they want them to do. They have camps in Nabu, the Dawna [mountains], and many other places. They force the villagers to do forced labour at their camps for 7 days at a time. They force the villagers to go to the jungle for 7 days before they can return.”*** - “Maung San Myint” (M, 45, Burman), Sittaun town, Mon State, describing his time as a trishaw driver in Kawkareik, Pa'an district (Interview #32, 8/98)

***“They force them to work on a rubber plantation and to build fences. Some have to go to plant rubber, some have to clear the roads, and some have to go to help build houses for the wives and children of the Burmese soldiers. The Burmese want to build houses for themselves, so they order the villagers to go and take them bamboo, wood and bamboo strips every day. That is Battalion #24, they're building the houses in their Battalion camp at Do Yin Seik...”*** - “Pa Ler Wah” (M, 30), Kaw B'Naw village, Pa'an district (Interview #33, 8/98)

In some areas, SPDC troops are now placing heavier demands for materials on villagers and also taking their land and forcing them to farm food for the Army, reportedly because their rations have been severely reduced or cut and they have been ordered to get their food from the villages. Villagers throughout the district already face severe difficulties feeding themselves due to all the demands placed on them and the bad crop this year, so it will be very difficult for them if they are also expected to grow food for the Army. Most villagers try to hire others to go in their place for shifts of forced labour, but demands are so frequent that very few people can afford to continue doing this for long, and most villagers in eastern Pa'an district have no money left whatsoever.

***“One time I saw them order a village headman to give money for porter fees, but they didn't give that money to the porters, they used it to buy food for themselves instead. There was another time I saw the Burmese at Sgaw Ko camp forcing the women and children from Kwih Lay and Sgaw Ko to fetch water for them every day in hot season. The babies were crying in the village but their mothers had no chance to give them milk. The ox-carts and the bullocks had no time to take a rest in the heat. Now they are demanding boats for their use.”*** - “Saw Tee Kaw” (M), Pah Klu village, southern Pa'an district (Interview #17, 9/98)

***“Now they are still forcing the villagers to work [since they came to the village 20 days ago]. The villagers have to work for 3 days each time. We dare not stay close to the Burmese. ... If I had been caught I would have had to be a porter.”*** - “Pa Li Kloh” (M, 21), Tee K'Haw village, northern Pa'an district (Interview #3, 9/98)

## **Portering**

***“They captured me when I was working in my paddy field near Pah Klu. I think it was one month ago. They called to me, ‘Uncle, come here quickly or we’ll shoot you dead!’ I was very afraid so I ran over to them, and they forced me to carry things for them. The DKBA soldiers caught me, but there were some Burmese soldiers with them too. They captured many people around that time. They made me carry shells - eight shells. I don’t know the proper name of that gun, but the shells were so big and heavy that I couldn’t stand up with them on my back unless someone helped me or I put them up on higher ground first before shouldering them. Then on top of that they also loaded one gallon of oil, a bag of pumpkins and a chicken. ... They gave me no rice. After carrying for two days I still hadn’t eaten rice, so I ran to escape near Ker Ghaw. The soldiers didn’t have any rice to eat either. I’m speaking the truth, I’m not lying to you! They didn’t hit me because I was a new porter [i.e. he hadn’t been with them for long so he still had strength enough to carry], but they hit the older porters and kicked them with their jungle boots. I wanted to say “Don’t do that” when they kicked the other porters but I was afraid that then they would hit me too. Whenever they said ‘Uncle, run quickly’ I had to run with the heavy things on my back. ... One night they forced us to walk all night. We had to climb the mountains and we had no sleep. When we arrived in Sgaw Ko in the morning they still didn’t let us sleep, they only let us take a short rest and then we went on again.” - “Saw Kweh” (M, 31), Thay Maw Gu vill., southern Pa’an dist. (Interview #9, 8/98)***

Though portering is a form of forced labour, it is considered by the villagers to be in a category of its own. It is without question the most dreaded form of forced labour, and it is on the increase in eastern Pa’an district due to the current SPDC military campaigns against the KNLA and the villagers in the Dawna Range. Villagers from southeastern and central Pa’an district are being taken more and more regularly to haul supplies on short trips between local SPDC camps, and also to go along with military columns on longer trips into the Dawna. Women are being used more and more frequently, because the men dare not go and the villagers hope that the women will be treated less brutally, though this also creates the possibility of rape. Villagers can generally avoid a 5- to 7-day shift of portering by paying 3,000 to 5,000 Kyats or by hiring someone to go in their place, but very few subsistence farmers have any money anymore due to the incessant demands placed on them. Not only the SPDC, but the DKBA and occasionally the KNLA take villagers as porters; however, with the KNLA it is generally for short times and with no physical ill-treatment, and with the DKBA there is generally no physical abuse unless they are part of an SPDC column.

***“I had to go more times than I can count. That began when they arrived in our village a year ago. They would demand one or two people each time and later we would have to rotate with new porters. We had to porter for 3 to 6 days each time. If people couldn’t go they had to pay money to hire a porter to go for them. It cost 100 Kyats a day to hire someone.” - “Pa Shwe” (M, 29), Po Ti Pwa village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #1, 9/98)***

Porters with SPDC columns are treated brutally and fed little or nothing. Villagers forced to go as porters in Pa’an district are treated much the same as operations porters in other areas; saddled with heavy loads, kicked, prodded and abused if they are too slow, beaten if they fall, and left to die or killed if they become too sick or weak to continue. In most cases they are released at the end of the trip, but in other cases they can only go home if they escape.

***“Most of the time I had to carry bandoliers full of bullets for the medium machine gun. I had to carry 6 bandoliers full of bullets for the medium machine gun as well as 6 [mortar] shells as big as this. When they put all of it on my body I had a very hard time just standing up. Then***

*they also put many more small things on top, like cooking oil and other things that I couldn't see. ... (T)hey hit the other porters often. I saw it. I saw them beat the porters' faces often.*" - "Saw Kaw Ghay" (M, 31), villager from Myawaddy township now internally displaced (Interview #6, 8/98)

*"We villagers were having to pay taxes and fees, and on top of that we had to go to be porters and forced labourers too. The village headman was always asking us to go, and we had to go. I had to be a porter for the Ko Per Baw. They ordered the village headman to call the villagers to go. They told me I'd have to go for only one day, but then I had to go for five days. I had to carry food and cookpots. Two pots, plates, rice and other food like oil, onions, garlic and chillies - I think it must have weighed at least 10 viss [16 kg/35 lb] because it was very heavy."* - "Pa Kloh" (M, 28), southern Pa'an district (Interview #8, 8/98)

*"They only gave us a messtin-lid of rice to eat [about half of a small plate]. We didn't get enough, but there was nothing we could do about it. In Ker Ghaw the headman asked them, 'You forced these people to be porters, why don't you give them any food?' So then they ordered that headman to give them rice for the porters."* - "Saw Tha Wah" (M, 42), Taw Oak village, southern Pa'an district, describing how he had to go as an SPDC porter in July (Interview #13, 8/98)

Even when SPDC units obtain porters on regular rotations from villages in their area, they still catch anyone they encounter along their way and use them as porters. Villagers are extremely afraid of portering, and they know that almost all male villagers encountered by patrols in eastern Pa'an district are taken as porters. This is why village men usually run as soon as they see an SPDC patrol, and the soldiers usually open fire on any villager they see running. Many villagers are killed in this way.

*"If they asked the village headman to give them two porters then the village headman gave them two porters, but they still captured other men from the village to be porters. They released the captured porters only when they wanted to release them."* - "Pi San San" (F, 50), Taw Oak village, southern Pa'an district (Interview #18, 9/98)

Because of the current military operations in Pa'an district, the SPDC is also taking people in Kawkareik town to be porters. Usually they look for visitors to the town. Similarly, they are currently stopping passenger cars along the Myawaddy-Kawkareik road and taking passengers off the cars to be porters. According to people who have often travelled this road recently, they do not take everyone from every car, as they know this would cause everyone to stop using the road. Instead they only take one or two men from every few cars. Usually they look for people who do not have proper documentation and use this as an excuse to arrest them, then take them as porters. As is always the case with porters, the family is not notified and has no way of knowing what happened to the person, nor are they compensated if he or she is wounded or killed.

*"The Burmese didn't arrest everyone in the car. Sometimes they arrest one or two people and sometimes they let one or two cars go free. ... They don't want people to know they are arresting porters like this. If they arrested everyone on all the cars, they know the people who come to Thailand won't dare return to Burma. Now people say that the Burmese aren't arresting people to be porters, but they are always arresting people. They capture people to be porters every day because people are travelling every day. If people aren't going up they're travelling down, and if they're not coming down they're going up. So they can arrest people*



*every day.*” - “Pa Ler Wah” (M, 30), Kaw B’Naw village, Pa’an district, describing how the SPDC grabs people as porters off the public cars between Kawkareik and Myawaddy (Interview #33, 8/98)

## **Landmines and Human Mine Detonators**

*“His name is Pu K---. He’s over 50. He stepped on the mine between Kwih Lay and Taw Oak, on the hill called Ther Ko Kaw. Then later his wife stepped on a mine near the same place, and she was killed. At the time that she stepped on the mine nobody dared go to look, because many Burmese soldiers were staying around there. When I went to look later, first I just saw one of her slippers all torn apart and the other one in good shape, then I saw her head and her body on its side, with just a piece of her sarong, some cloth and a blanket.”* - “Maung Nyunt” (M, 40), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district, describing how his wife’s father and then her mother both stepped on landmines; her father lived but his leg was blown off (Interview #15, 8/98)

Landmines are being used extensively throughout the area by all parties to the conflict, the SPDC, DKBA, and KNLA. In eastern Pa’an district the SPDC is primarily using Burmese-made anti-personnel mines marked types ‘MM1’ and ‘MM2’. The MM1 is a cylindrical mine which looks much like the American-made M76, and in fact the SPDC troops still do lay some old American M76 mines along with their MM1’s. They sometimes mount the MM1 on a post at waist level in long grass or scrub and rig it with a tripwire; in this way it will kill the villager who trips it and possibly several others rather than just blowing off his or her leg. The M76 and MM1 are very powerful. The MM2 is modelled on a cheap Chinese-made mine which is flat, round and partly made of plastic; however, the Burmese version is made of metal. The SPDC troops also have some of the Chinese-made version. The KNLA used to have some American M76 and some Chinese mines, but for the most part they are now using homemade mines of their own design. KHRG currently has no information on the types of mines being used by the DKBA, but the villagers insist that the DKBA is laying mines as well.

The KNLA generally lays its mines slightly off the pathways but sometimes right on the path; they always make a point of notifying local villagers of which routes are mined and whether the mines are on the path or not, though this often proves insufficient as villagers continue to be blown up by KNLA mines. The SPDC and DKBA lay mines indiscriminately on pathways, around farmfields and in abandoned villages without notifying anyone. Villagers’ cattle are regularly killed by these mines. When a villager’s cow steps on an SPDC mine, the owner must keep quiet because if the SPDC finds the owner he is fined “to pay the cost of the landmine”. DKBA commander Moe Kyo has also been accused of doing this in southern Pa’an district.

*“...they [DKBA] lay landmines, and they burn down our field huts, our haystacks and our bullock carts too. Our cattle stepped on their landmines, and then they fined the cattle’s owner for the price of the mine. Moe Kyo [a DKBA officer] did that.”* - “Pa Weh Doh” (M, 47), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #14, 8/98)

*“...the SPDC Army and the DKBA came and stayed together in this area and put landmines close to the villages and around the villages. Whenever somebody’s cattle stepped on the landmines, the owner had to pay them money for the price of the landmine. Therefore the owners of the cattle who had stepped on the landmines kept quiet because they were afraid*

*that the SPDC soldiers would find out. Some people had 5 or 6 cattle but all have been killed by landmines.”* - report by KHRG monitor in southern Pa'an District (Interview #11, 8/98)

*“Last year two villagers were killed by the landmines. KNLA landmines. They knew where the landmines were because the KNLA had told them, so they went safely, but just before they came back the KNLA laid more landmines. They didn't know about the new landmines and they were killed.”* - “Pu Ler Muh” (M, 58), Meh Kreh village, northeastern Pa'an District (Interview #26, 4/98)

If a villager trips an MM1 mine which is mounted at waist level with a tripwire, he or she will almost certainly be killed, possibly along with others. When villagers step on buried mines, the general result is that the leg is immediately blown off around the knee or higher, and the other leg is badly wounded by shrapnel. In addition, the person walking behind them is frequently hit in the face with shrapnel and blinded. This effect is so common that one villager, in describing a porter whose leg had been blown off, said that, “The Burmese were carrying him, and the blind porters were holding on to the others and following”. Villagers in the area are more and more frequently being maimed or killed by the mines of all sides in the conflict. They step on the mines when heading to their fields, fleeing to the hills or to Thailand, going from village to village, or returning to their destroyed villages, which are sometimes booby-trapped by departing SPDC troops. Due to the difficulty of getting to medical help, many of those who step on the mines bleed to death.

*“I stepped on a landmine on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February this year. It was a landmine of the Burmese or the Ko Per Baw. I know it was theirs because I heard them talking about it when they came to our village later. ... It was on the path to our field. I was going to get thatch for the roof of our house. ... My foot was blown off when I stepped on it, and a piece of the landmine even hurt me here on my other leg, you can see it here! After that my uncle and aunty sent me to the hospital among the Burmese [in Myawaddy]. ... I had to stay in the hospital for 12 days, and then the doctor forced me to go home even though my leg was not well healed. Some pieces of the landmine are still in my leg and they give me pain sometimes. They just cut off my leg and then forced me to go home. When I stepped on the landmine I was 8 months pregnant. I was in the hospital for 12 days, then came home and after 9 days in my house I gave birth to my daughter. It was too early to give birth, she was not even 9 months in my belly.”* - “Naw Muh Lah” (F, 23), Sgaw Ko village, southern Pa'an District (Interview #7, 8/98)

***“From our village only my sister stepped on a landmine. A villager from Wah Mi Klah stepped on a KNLA landmine as well. His name is Kyet Po. Many villagers stepped on landmines. Some stepped on the mines when they fled for Thailand and others stepped on the mines when they went to look for their cattle and buffalos.”*** - “Pa Li Kloh” (M, 21), Tee K’Haw village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #3, 9/98)

With so many landmines in the area, SPDC and DKBA columns throughout eastern Pa’an district are now consistently forcing some of their porters to march in front of the column as human mine detonators and human shields against ambush. Around the villages of Sgaw Ko, Pah Klu and Taw Oak in the southeast, they even take people specifically for this purpose in addition to people to carry their loads. In these villages they have repeatedly made specific demands for women to march in front of them, and have occasionally even made women carrying small children do this. Villagers from Taw Oak village report that at least 6 people from their small village have died in the past year from landmines, particularly from forced labour as human mine detonators. In Sgaw Ko village in late July or early August, an SPDC patrol demanded that a group of women from the village go with one of their patrols to detonate mines, but the village headman would not allow it so he went in their place. His name was Bo Meh Tah, and he was 41 years old with a wife and 4 children. Between Sgaw Ko and Pah Klu he stepped on a mine and was killed.

***“Battles occurred sometimes. The battles were between the DKBA and the KNLA. They would use me as their cover - they forced me to go in front of them. They captured the villagers to be porters and forced them go in front of them because they did not dare to go in the front. If the villagers wouldn’t go in front of them they beat the villagers. The man who hit me was Corporal Thin Ga Jut. There were 4 or sometimes 7 other porters like me who were also forced to go in front by the DKBA.”*** - “Saw Tee Kaw” (M), Pah Klu village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #17, 9/98)

***“All the village elders have fled. Now there are no more village elders. The village headman from Sgaw Ko was killed when they forced him to guide them. He stepped on a landmine and died. His name was Bo Meh Tah. He stepped on the mine between Pah Klu and Sgaw Ko. That happened only about 10 days before we came here.”*** - “Pa Weh Doh” (M, 47), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #14, 8/98)

***“... they ordered the women to go with them and walk in front of them. The village headman knew that if the women went they would go with their small children, and if they stepped on landmines the women and the children would be badly hurt. ... so the village headman said, ‘I will go instead of you, because you women have small children to take care of’. That village headman, who was 41 years old and had a wife and 4 children, stepped on a landmine when he was in front of the SPDC soldiers and he died, but the SPDC soldiers never took care of his poor family. The villagers look on him as a hero who died to save his villagers, but none of them can help his family because every villager is living in poverty and each family has a very hard time just surviving themselves.”*** - KHRG monitor in southern Pa’an District describing the death of Sgaw Ko village headman Bo Meh Tah (Interview #11, 8/98)

Even if the villagers know which paths have been mined by the KNLA they don’t know the precise locations of the mines, and if they do or say anything which indicates they know the route is mined, then the SPDC troops will accuse them of being KNLA collaborators and torture or execute them. In addition, the SPDC and DKBA troops do not know where each other’s mines are placed. In order to have people to send in front of their columns, SPDC and DKBA

units are demanding more and more villagers as porters around Pah Klu, Sgaw Ko and Taw Oak villages in the southeast. Right now, fear of being taken as porters and being used to detonate mines is one of the major reasons villagers from that area give for having fled their villages.

*“The Burmese forced people in our village to be porters, and in other villages they forced everyone, even the old women and the children. They force people to go as porters and to go in front of them to clear landmines. Many women and children have died when they went as porters. ... Now the villagers who are still there are giving them money, but if the soldiers go fighting they still gather the women and children to go in front of them to set off the landmines. If the Kaw Thoo Lei [KNLA] shoot at them the bullets will hurt the women and children, but if we don’t go in front of them they torture the villagers.”* - “Naw Lah Say” (F, 25), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #12, 8/98)

*“When we had to go as porters they forced us to go in front of them and they followed behind. Between Taw Oak and Sgaw Ko villages there are landmines, so they didn’t dare go first and they pushed us out to go in front of them. We were lucky that time and didn’t step on the mines.”* - “Pa Weh Doh” (M, 47), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #14, 8/98)

*“They forced the villagers to go in front of them to detonate any landmines that might be there, whether the people wanted to go or not. The porters lost their legs that way. I saw a villager from the plains whom the Burmese had arrested to be a porter who had lost his leg. The Burmese were carrying him, and the blind porters were holding on to the others and following [when one person steps on a mine the person behind him is often hit in the face and eyes by shrapnel]. I saw 5 porters with injuries but we dared not look at all of them.”* - “Pa Li Kloh” (M, 21), Tee K’Haw village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #3, 9/98)

*“Every time they entered the village they forced villagers to go as porters, and some villagers didn’t dare go as porters. Some of those who went as porters died, and some got wounded or lost their legs and hands. Six people died as porters last year. Yeh Paw Ta, and Naw Hser’s mother. Naw Hser’s mother was 54, and I don’t know how old Yay Paw Ta was, I think he was over 40. Also Naw Sghu, she was just over 30. Dta Oh, he was 30 years old. And Naw Hser Paw - she was 18 years old. Her husband’s name is Hsa Ler Lah. She was carrying her small baby daughter, who was only one or two months old. When she stepped on the landmine she died together with her baby, and a girl and a boy lost their legs - Ma Leh Kyo and Pa Roh. ... All of them were from Taw Oak village. They also killed Pa Mu Dah, who was 15 years old, and Set Lay. He was about 40. He was married with no children, but his wife is pregnant. Another one they killed was Maung Thaung Ngeh. He was 30 and married. The Burmese killed his wife as well. Her name was Naw Ga May, she was about 25. They had 2 children, both daughters. They’ve killed all those people just this hot season [between March and August 1998].”* - “Saw Tha Wah” (M, 42), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #13, 8/98)

## **DKBA**

***“Now Thu Za Na [monk founder of the DKBA] dares not stay full-time in Khaw Taw, because they [DKBA and SPDC] don’t trust each other. Sometimes he goes to stay in Taw Oo [Toungoo], in 20 Battalion area [Papun District] or in Pa’an. I don’t know whether he still gives the orders or not, but some of the DKBA are really bad.”*** - “Saw Po Htoo” (M, 23), KNLA soldier in Meh Th’Wah township (Interview #23, 4/98)

In the north of Pa’an District along the Salween River lies Myaing Gyi Ngu (known in Karen as Khaw Taw), headquarters of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). More than a headquarters, this is also a ‘refuge’ where thousands of Karen families live. It has become so large that it has been given a new official name: Pyi Daun town (‘Pyi Daun’ is Burmese meaning roughly ‘establish the new country’). It was set up by U Thuzana, the monk who founded the DKBA in December 1994 with the backing of the SLORC. The ‘refuge’ was used to pull people away from the KNU/KNLA and then use them to set up an Army which joined the SLORC in its fight against the KNU/KNLA. Many, though far from all, of the families in Myaing Gyi Ngu have provided one or more family members to be DKBA soldiers. Families living there are not allowed to farm or to eat meat; instead they receive a small ration of rice and occasional beans from the SPDC. Families of DKBA soldiers receive additional food items such as cooking oil. Most people there find the ration insufficient, but they remain there because those living in Myaing Gyi Ngu don’t have to do forced labour for the SPDC, only for the DKBA, which is much milder; generally it involves building pagodas and maintaining roads, but the labourers are not usually beaten or otherwise abused.

***“When I was in Myaing Gyi Ngu, I saw the DKBA punish people who had committed minor offences by making them parade themselves around while they were naked. They also demanded money from them, and then finally put them in prison. At Myaing Gyi Ngu I was forced to work on their farms and dig toilets for them. They were going to force me to become a DKBA soldier, but I didn’t want to so I fled and came here.”*** - “Saw Tee Kaw” (M), Pah Klu village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #17, 9/98)

Estimates on the number of families currently living in Myaing Gyi Ngu by those who have visited range from 3,000 to 5,000 families. The Buddhists live in the main settlement, while the Christians live in a site across the Salween River. Reportedly the Christians suffer no persecution and there are even Christians in the DKBA Army; in addition, while the Buddhists are not allowed to farm in Myaing Gyi Ngu because of the crowding, the Christians can reportedly do some farming on their side of the river. In Myaing Gyi Ngu a lot of work has been done building large schools, a monastery and a hospital. The schools teach the SPDC curriculum, and the hospital is staffed by doctors sent by the SPDC on rotation; it appears that these may be newly graduated doctors forced to do a 6-month assignment in Myaing Gyi Ngu on graduation.

***“Many villagers stay in Khaw Taw. Now the school and the big houses are growing. They’re building up the school, the monastery and the houses of the commanders and officers. They’re building a system for electricity, a cinema, broadcast station and the hospital.”*** - “Saw Kaw Doh” (M, 19), villager from just outside Myaing Gyi Ngu who had just joined the KNLA (Interview #31, 4/98)

DKBA numbers are difficult to estimate, but they probably have somewhere between 1,500 and 2,500 soldiers at present. Very few of them can be found in Myaing Gyi Ngu itself, as they are very thinly spread throughout Pa'an, Papun, Thaton and part of Doooplaya districts. There is no SPDC base in Myaing Gyi Ngu itself. The SPDC continues to supply the DKBA with all their arms and ammunition, though reportedly in insufficient quantities as the DKBA has far fewer weapons than it has soldiers. Cash salaries paid by SLORC to DKBA soldiers were cut off about 2 years ago. Sources from Myaing Gyi Ngu claim that the SPDC has announced that it will support the DKBA with food only for "4 years and 1 month"; calculated from the DKBA's formation in December 1994, this means until the end of 1998. If the SPDC keeps to this, the future of Myaing Gyi Ngu and of the DKBA itself is very uncertain.

*"I think there are about 5,000 families [in Myaing Gyi Ngu]. They are also refugees. They receive a ration from the SPDC. They still give them rice and sometimes beans, but now they only give rice once every 5 days. They said that after 4 years and one month they will stop giving anything. [Four years and one month from the formation of the DKBA, meaning the end of 1998.] Some people don't want to stay there, but if they leave they have to do forced labour for the Burmese and the DKBA, such as road construction. That's why it's better to stay inside [the Khaw Taw refuge], even though they can't farm or do anything."* - "Saw Po Htoo" (M, 23), KNLA soldier in Meh Th'Wah township, describing DKBA headquarters at Myaing Gyi Ngu (Interview #23, 4/98)

*"They said they would give it for four years and one month [from the start of the DKBA in December 1994; i.e. until the end of 1998]. After that I think the people will have food problems."* - "Saw Ghay Htoo" (M, 20+), human rights monitor who visited Myaing Gyi Ngu (Interview #30, 4/98)

*"I think about 3,000 [soldiers are in the DKBA]. They have many people but only a few guns. They don't have enough guns, and most of the members are new DKBA [i.e. not former KNLA soldiers, but villagers who have joined]. Most of them come from 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade [Pa'an District]. Most of the KNLA and the villagers who joined DKBA didn't want to, but the DKBA arrested them and made them become DKBA. ... The DKBA leaders said that if T'Bee Met ["closed-eyes", i.e. KNU/KNLA] came we would fight them. The SLORC said, 'Don't worry, we will support you if you fight the KNU.' They said, 'We will give you food, boats, trucks and airplanes.'" - "Saw Htoo Kler" (M, 23), former DKBA soldier who fled and joined the KNLA (Interview #29, 4/98)*

U Thuzana himself is very seldom in Myaing Gyi Ngu anymore and spends much of his time at temple-related activities in other parts of Burma; whether this is because he no longer believes in the DKBA or for other reasons is unclear. Outside of Myaing Gyi Ngu the DKBA does not have much civilian support. This is because in some areas, such as eastern Doooplaya district, they are very helpful in protecting villagers from SPDC abuses and retaliations, but in most other areas, including most of Pa'an district, they work closely with the SPDC as guides, informants, and helping SPDC units to obtain food and forced labour from villagers. Though the DKBA are supposedly vegetarian, outside Khaw Taw they often take villagers' livestock and eat meat; some DKBA soldiers compromise by telling villagers, "Two legs good, four legs bad", meaning they can eat chicken or fish but not pork or beef. They also engage in active battle with the KNLA, run checkpoints along roads to collect money from travellers, extort money and food out of villages, and are deeply involved in the logging business, particularly selling logs to Thai businessmen; in eastern Pa'an district they prohibit villagers to do any logging without their permission. DKBA units frequently arrest, detain and torture villagers on their own initiative,

take villagers as porters and sometimes shoot villagers who try to run from being taken as porters; because of this, most villagers of all religions in eastern Pa'an district see them as being very similar to the SPDC, often even lumping them together as 'the Burmese'.

***"The situation got better for a while because of the DKBA, but after a short time it got worse again. Their commander has ordered them to kill all the Karen people they see in the forest. We ran away. We didn't dare stay for that."*** - Man from Wah Mi Klah village, northern Pa'an district (Interview #4, 9/98)

***"I think they [DKBA] have only come here once. They came to get food - they looked for our chickens and pigs."***

***Interviewer: "But the DKBA are supposed to be vegetarians!"***

***"No, they eat meat also. They always take meat when they go away. They tell the Burmese that they don't eat meat, but they all do."***

***[Another man:] "The DKBA never eat meat when they're staying in Khaw Taw, but when they leave that place they eat a lot of meat."*** - "Pu Ler Muh" (M, 58), Meh Kreh village, northeastern Pa'an District (Interview #26, 4/98)

***"Recently, [DKBA commander] Maung Kwa asked for 100,000 Kyats from a Paw Baw Ko villager. ... The Paw Baw Ko villager gave him 90,000 Kyats but he wasn't satisfied. So he went to the villager again with one of his friends, Htee Sa Rah, to get some more money so the total would be 100,000 Kyats. The villager couldn't give it to them, so they put the barrel of their gun in his nose and killed him. He didn't use the 90,000 Kyats he got from the villager for anything but his own family. When he went to Htee Wah Blaw village he forced the village headman to give him 25,000 Kyats and also stole a motorbike."*** - "Saw Tee Kaw" (M), Pah Klu village, southern Pa'an district (Interview #17, 9/98)

***"The villagers have to gather roofing leaves, bamboo, paddy, milled rice, and cloth, and send them to Khaw Taw, and they always have to pay taxes. Then they order them not to give anything if the KNLA comes for taxes. The Ko Per Baw who stay around Kwih Lay do not do much. Sometimes they come to visit us with a gallon of alcohol and we drink alcohol together. They beat anyone who does logging without their permission. Logging is very important to them. The Kwih Lay villagers aren't allowed to do any logging, but the Ko Per Baw come and saw down all the trees. If Kwih Lay villagers want to do logging, they have to get a pass. They have to pay 1,000, sometimes 2,000 or 5,000 for the pass, and then if they deal with the Ko Per Baw they can do logging. ... they [DKBA members] only think things like, 'If I have a wide face [i.e. pride and big status], if I am proud, if I can become a leader and a bigshot that will be good for me.'" - "Saw Kaw Doh" (M, 19), villager from just outside Myaing Gyi Ngu who had just joined the KNLA (Interview #31, 4/98)***

As a result very few villagers want to join the DKBA, and some people who join do so in order to gain power over other villagers. Most of the former KNLA soldiers who joined the DKBA when it was formed have left. Currently the DKBA membership appears to be divided between those who want to improve the future for Karen people, and those who are more interested in making money and wielding local power, with the latter group forming the majority. From their statements to villagers, many of those in the first group appear to believe that if they help the SPDC eliminate the KNU then the SPDC will withdraw from Karen State or the DKBA will drive them out. On their side, the SPDC makes it very clear in their actions that they distrust the DKBA and would rather not have them around, and that they only tolerate them because they are so useful.

***“Some of the Ko Per Baw drink alcohol, some don’t allow it, and some beat the villagers for making it.”*** - “Saw Kaw Doh” (M, 19), villager from just outside Myaing Gyi Ngu who recently joined KNLA (Interview #31, 4/98)

***“They told me that I should join DKBA. I told them that I didn’t want to become a DKBA soldier, but they replied to me, ‘If you don’t want to join DKBA we will kill you’. I told them that I was afraid to die, so they gave me a gun.”*** - “Saw Htoo Kler” (M, 23), former DKBA soldier who fled and joined the KNLA, explaining how he became a DKBA soldier in 1995 (Interview #29, 4/98)

***“The SPDC never admit that they fight against the DKBA, even though they do fight against them. They always say, ‘We thought your men were KNLA, we made a mistake’, and the DKBA is satisfied and forgives them every time. But when our KNLA fights against them, they are never satisfied and never forgive us!”*** - “Saw Po Htoo” (M, 23), KNLA soldier in Meh Th’Wah township (Interview #23, 4/98)

***“In the evening, I asked a DKBA [soldier] if he gets paid and he told me that when he joined the DKBA Army he was paid 500 Kyats a month. Then I asked him what about now, he said he doesn’t earn any salary now but he will be paid again at the end of this year. I wasn’t satisfied with that answer so I asked a Burmese soldier when he came. ... I asked him, ‘What will you do with the DKBA? Will you keep the DKBA as your servants?’ He answered, ‘No, the DKBA is going to put down their arms. Then they will become villagers. They can’t live as soldiers for much longer.’”*** - “Pi San San” (F, 50), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #18, 9/98)

According to those who have visited Myaing Gyi Ngu this year, the villagers there believe that U Thuzana is a good monk and many believe that he has magic powers. When asked about the attacks on refugee camps in Thailand, villagers at Myaing Gyi Ngu feel that these are not conducted on the orders of U Thuzana but on the orders of the SPDC, and carried out by local DKBA groups along the Thai border who they say are mostly interested in logging and taking *myin say* (an amphetamine-type drug).

***“...they [villagers in Khaw Taw] felt sorry about that [the refugee camp attacks]. They said that it was something that was done by the people at the border, not the plan of the monk. They said that most of the [DKBA] people who stay at the border work selling logs and some take ‘myin say’ [an amphetamine-type drug, known in Thailand as Ya Ma], and that the SPDC told them to do it.”*** - “Saw Ghay Htoo” (M, 20+), human rights monitor who visited Myaing Gyi Ngu describing what people there told him (Interview #30, 4/98)

***“(T)hat is not the plan of the monks. That is the Burmese. Many people in 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade [Thaton district] even say that he [U Thuzana] is not a real monk but a Burmese spy.”*** - “Saw Kaw Doh” (M, 19), villager from just outside Myaing Gyi Ngu who recently joined KNLA, talking about the attacks on refugee camps in Thailand (Interview #31, 4/98)

In retaliation for attacks on the KNLA, and in particular for the DKBA’s attacks on Karen refugee camps in Thailand, the KNLA launched two attacks on Myaing Gyi Ngu, the first in January 1998 and the second on 24<sup>th</sup> March. In the first attack no one was wounded; the KNLA fired shells which fell short of the village and the soldiers didn’t enter. In the second attack, about 40 KNLA soldiers attacked with mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, entering part of



Myaing Gyi Ngu itself firing automatic rifles and grenades. According to KNLA soldiers involved in the attack, 15 Myaing Gyi Ngu residents were killed and about 70 injured, all of them apparently civilians as the attackers didn't encounter any DKBA soldiers. When they arrived in the village they just yelled at the villagers to get out, opened fire on the monastery and the houses, and tried to burn some houses before withdrawing. They say that they wanted to capture or kill some DKBA leaders, but they failed to find any.

*"We said to each other, 'We must attack Ko Per Baw sometimes because they've already come and attacked the refugee camps two or three times. They burned down the houses and shot at the women, and some women died.' The Thai soldiers that had the duty to take care of the refugee camp didn't dare to shoot at the Ko Per Baw, they ran away. Then the women said, 'The Thai soldiers guard us but they don't dare shoot at the Ko Per Baw.' ... The women say, 'The Thai soldiers are very brave when nothing is happening, but when anything happens they run to Mae Sot!' ... The Thai soldiers never chased them. The Thai soldiers aren't brave. They are women." - "Saw Htoo Kler" (M, 23), former DKBA soldier who fled and joined the KNLA, explaining the reasoning behind the late March KNLA attack on Myaing Gyi Ngu (Interview #29, 4/98)*

*"Forty of us went for the attack. I fired the big gun [mortar or rocket-propelled grenade], TAW! TAW! The people were running, the children were running everywhere and crying 'Pi-pi-pa-pa!'" - "Saw Htoo Kler" (M, 23), former DKBA soldier who fled and joined the KNLA, describing the late March KNLA attack on Myaing Gyi Ngu (Interview #29, 4/98)*

*"15 people died and altogether 70 people were injured. Our main aim was the monastery, so we fired at that. We also shot at villagers' houses. I fired 2 magazines at one house, a big house [therefore probably a leader's house], and I think I heard cries from inside. Also, a son of the commander has a girlfriend there and he wanted to go and talk to her, but some people stopped him so he took two hand grenades and threw them among the villagers. ... We didn't see any Ko Per Baw soldiers, maybe there were just a few soldiers inside their houses." - "Saw Kaw Doh" (M, 19), villager from just outside Myaing Gyi Ngu who had just joined the KNLA describing the March attack on Myaing Gyi Ngu (Interview #31, 4/98)*

*"We call them 'thawka a'thu' ['the monk's army']. The army of the monk must stay wherever the Burmese ask them to stay and do whatever the Burmese ask them to do. We consider them to be the dogs of the Burmese, because if the Burmese ask them to come and attack Huay Kaloke [refugee camp], they must come because the Burmese have fed them. Sometimes I think it wouldn't be wrong to call them the Burmese Army, because they are led by the Burmese. If they didn't accept the Burmese as their leaders, where would they get their guns, bullets, food and everything?! ... If the Burmese have to fight they don't really need to fight at all, because they send the DKBA in front to fight for them. It looks like the Burmese love the DKBA, but really they don't love them at all. The DKBA themselves say that they will fight against the Burmese if the Burmese abuse them. But as I see it, how can they fight against the Burmese when the Burmese are their leaders? If they fight against their leaders, won't they just become robbers? What I mean is, if the Burmese stop feeding them then I think most of them will become robbers. If they don't work as robbers then what will they do to feed their families? ... One of these days some of those who have joined the DKBA will weep for it." - "Pa Ler Wah" (M, 30), Kaw B'Naw village, Pa'an district (Interview #33, 8/98)*

## **Life of the Villagers**

***“This year the weather has given the villagers many problems, because there has been little rain so the villagers haven’t been able to sow their paddy and other fruits and vegetables on time. As a result they now have less paddy, fruits and vegetables than usual, and they have no insurance for their survival in the coming year. Moreover, the SPDC has now said that this coming year the villagers must give them 700 Kyats [per family] every month. The villagers know that they can’t give that every month, because they don’t even know how they’ll be able to eat this coming year.”*** - report by KHRG monitor in southern Pa’an District (Interview #11, 8/98)

Life for villagers in eastern Pa’an district is becoming increasingly difficult and uncertain. In the southeast, they are currently facing increasing demands for forced labour as porters, but they don’t dare to go because porters are now being forced to walk in front of military columns to detonate landmines. They used to be able to pay their way out of such forced labour, but their money and valuables have already been exhausted paying the ever-increasing extortion demands, particularly to the SPDC and DKBA. They can no longer pay any of these fees, yet they face arrest or the destruction of their villages if they cannot.

***“If he can tell the Burmese what they want to hear then they won’t beat him, but if he can’t then they’ll beat him. Our headman has already fled from the village. He fled while I was still in the village. He said that he felt bad having to ask the villagers to be porters and to do forced labour.”*** - “Pi Wah K’Paw” (F, 60), Htee Wah Blaw village, southern Pa’an district, describing how the SPDC troops treated her village headman (Interview #20, 9/98)

Villagers throughout the Dawna region have little or no access to medicines or medical facilities, because of the distances and difficulty of travel with the attendant risks of stepping on landmines or being caught to be porters, and because they cannot pay to go to a Burmese hospital, where patients must pay for care, medicines, and all their food. As a result many villagers are dying of treatable diseases such as malaria, dysentery, and diarrhoea, complicated by oedema and other serious vitamin deficiencies. These problems are worst among those who are already internally displaced. The villagers also have very little access to schools or religious facilities; for example, villages in the Meh Kreh area in the northeast had their villages burned two to three years ago, and no longer dare to build schools in their villages because they are sure it will attract an SPDC attack. In their experience, if there is an ‘unauthorised’ school then the SPDC will suspect that the teachers were trained in KNU schools and that they are not teaching the SPDC curriculum, and then they will attack the village to destroy the school and kill the teachers. This has sometimes been the case in Papun and Dooplaya districts in the past. As a result, the children in their area have no access even to primary school. Similarly, they see no point in building a Buddhist monastery because in the current struggle to survive no one can even think of becoming a monk, and a Christian church would be just as much a magnet for attack as a school.

***“Many people have died from illnesses because of the lack of medicine there. Illness is one way to make people poor. The lives of the people there are now not so different from the lives of animals.”*** - report by KHRG monitor in southern Pa’an District (Interview #11, 8/98)

***“No school. No hospital. There are some children, girls and boys, who need to go to school. But there is no school, and no teacher to teach. We dare not build a school, because we are afraid that if we do they will come.” [Another man added:] “We’re afraid that we’d have to suffer badly for having a school. We never really know the heart of the Burmese.” - “Pu Ler Muh” (M, 58), Meh Kreh village, northeastern Pa’an District (Interview #26, 4/98)***

***“Are there any schoolchildren here?”***

***“There is no school so how can we have schoolchildren? We dare not open a school. Before we had a school, but I don’t know what the Burmese would do to us or to our school if we tried to open one. If we needed teachers we’d have to look for them in other places. There is no one here who can read and write.” - “Pu Kaw Soe” (M, 50), Kwih Law Ploh village, northeastern Pa’an District (Interview #25, 4/98)***

***“There is no monastery and no school. There is no school now, but before we had a school. If you want a school, the teachers must be Burmese government teachers, or else they will kill them. They really will, the Burmese will kill them. ... They will never allow us to study Karen [language]. The teachers must come from Burma with their Burmese teacher’s card. Our Karen teachers have no Burmese teacher’s cards, so if they see our teachers they will kill them. That’s why we can’t try to open a school.” - “Pati Lah Say” (M, 43), Meh Kreh village, northeastern Pa’an District (Interview #24, 4/98)***

Now farmers in the southeast are also facing demands for the carts and bullock teams they need to do their farming. Throughout the district farmers are finding life impossible because the weak rainfall has wiped out much of their crop this year and yet they face further demands for rice from the SPDC, the DKBA and the KNLA all at once, and failure to meet any of these demands can mean serious punishment. It is difficult for them to farm, because they must spend much of their time doing forced labour at crucial cropping times, and many villages in the area already have a curfew of 4 p.m. imposed by the SPDC; they are only allowed to go to their fields in the morning taking only enough rice for their lunch, and they must be back in the village by 4 p.m. (or by sunset in some villages) or they will be arrested and beaten or tortured, or shot on sight if seen outside the village. For many villagers whose fields are far from the village, this is making it impossible for them to grow a proper crop. At this time of year, between June and November, they would normally spend much of their time living in their field huts to tend their fields and drive off wild pigs and other animals. Even working in their fields with permission during the day, if a farmer sees an SPDC or DKBA group approaching he often has two choices: stand and be caught as a porter, or run and be shot at. Villagers continue to be routinely and regularly shot dead throughout Pa’an district simply for trying to run from patrols.

***“When they’re around the village they don’t allow people to take rice to their fields. If you go to your farm hut, whether it’s nearby or far away you’re only allowed to take enough rice for one day. If they see you taking more than that they accuse you of taking rice for the KNU and punish you. You can only take 5 small tins [about 1 kg./2 lb.] at a time, so you have to come back every day to get more. That makes it very difficult for people whose fields are far away. Moreover, we have to arrive back at the village by 4 p.m. because if we arrive later than that they’ll shoot us. Nobody has come back later than 4 o’clock yet so nobody’s been shot, but we also have to fear the landmines which they put on the paths to our fields.” - “Saw Tha Dah” (M, 27), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #10, 8/98)***

Combined with all of these difficulties are SPDC raids on villages and forced relocations. In the northeast near Meh Th’Wah they have not occurred yet, but the villagers already fear them

enough to start fleeing their villages. In the southeast they have already been ordered for the end of the harvest, and in the Meh Lah Ah area in the eastern Dawna, they already hit full force in September when SPDC troops burned villages and drove villagers into the hills and to Thailand.

With all of these problems facing them at the same time, many villagers have already found they had no option but to flee into hiding in the hills with whatever they could carry, or to flee toward Thailand to become refugees.

***“Right now we have to suffer from poverty, but we can survive. But if the problems or the poverty get any worse than they are right now, about all we can do is cut off our own heads and die. We already tried to run to the refugee camp, but then we had to come back here because the DKBA attacked the refugee camp.”*** - “Pati Lah Say” (M, 43), Meh Kreh village, northeastern Pa’an District (Interview #24, 4/98)

## **Flight**

***“I think they will come. We’re afraid right now. If they come we will run away, because we are afraid of them. If the DKBA come we’ll run away from them too. I’m afraid of the DKBA too. We’re afraid of them even more than the Burmese, because they know everything about us.”*** - “Pu Ler Doh” (M, 50), Meh Ko Kee village, northeast Pa’an District (Interview #28, 4/98)

In August 1998 a group of several hundred Karen refugees from southeastern Pa’an district crossed into Thailand and camped out on a riverbank. Later in August, a group of about 1,500 more refugees crossed about 80 kilometres further north, fleeing the commencement of forced relocations in the eastern Dawna Range. In September, more than 1,600 additional refugees crossed from Tee K’Haw, Wah Mi Klah, B’Nweh Pu, Po Paw Lay, Meh Lah Ah Hta, Meh Lah Ah Kee, Meh Keh, Klay Po Kloh, Po Ti Pwa, Ma Oh Pu, and Tha Pwih Hser villages in the same area after SPDC troops destroyed some of their villages in the eastern Dawna. These refugees are just part of the total number of villagers affected, many of whom fled into the hills rather than head for Thailand, either because the route to Thailand was blocked by troops or landmines, because they feared the abuses of refugees by Thai authorities which Karen villagers have all heard about, because they feared the SPDC/DKBA attacks on the refugee camps, or simply because they will do almost anything to stay close to their land.

***“Whenever they heard that the KNLA had put landmines anywhere or when they thought there would be fighting, they called the women to go in front of them. ... The last time they did that, some villagers from Sgaw Ko were killed. Many people died the last time they were forced to be porters. The Burmese also shot dead my uncle and Pa Mu Dah. And when Pa Set Lay ran to escape from the Burmese soldiers, he stepped on a landmine and died. His wife wants to flee and come here, but she can’t because she’s pregnant, she has young children, and her father is blind. If they come they have to pass right beside the Burmese camp and it’s very difficult. Many people want to flee the village but they can’t because they have young children. When I came here it was very difficult. I ran with my baby until I couldn’t breathe.”*** - “Naw Lah Say” (F, 25), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district, just after arrival in Thailand (Interview #12, 8/98)

Even the refugees who crossed in large groups into Thailand make up only part of the total number who crossed. Others interviewed by KHRG had tried to cross individually but were

driven back at gunpoint by Thai troops; some slipped into the refugee camps unofficially, and became part of the increasing population of unregistered refugees in the camps; and others have most likely headed for the border towns or Bangkok to become part of the illegal labour force. Regardless of where they have ended up, the vast majority of them have fled because there was no other choice left open to them. Otherwise they would never give up their homes and fields.

In the villages of the southeast, many of those who can still find a way to meet all the demands of the Armies and survive are remaining, though more will likely continue to flee. Further north in the eastern Dawna, no one remains in Meh Keh, Tha Pwih Hser, Meh Lah Ah and Po Ti Pwa villages because they have been completely destroyed, though there are likely some villagers still hiding in the forests nearby. In the villages of the area which have not been completely destroyed, such as Wah Mi Klah and Tee K'Haw, most villagers have fled but they report that some of their elderly and handicapped relatives still remain behind. This often happens when the SPDC wipes out villages, and those left behind sometimes die of starvation or disease.

***“Some villagers are still in the village. They are all grandmothers and grandfathers, and there are also 2 blind people. The Burmese didn’t do anything to them. There are still people in 7 houses of the village. ... We fled and stayed in Ka Ner Ko, at the source of the river. At that time my wife was sick. The Burmese asked the villagers to call us back. They came to us and said the Burmese weren’t in the village any longer. When they came to call us, the Burmese followed them and waited for us on the path. When I headed back with my bag it was night, and there was a full moon. They caught us and took all of our torches, and we had to go with them in the dark. Three men were arrested with me. We couldn’t see the way. Then we arrived near our homes. ... When I was arrested they were also arresting many other villagers, men and women. They said ‘Don’t run’, that if we ran they would burn our houses. We didn’t care whether they burned our houses, we just planned to run whenever they weren’t watching us anymore. ... I started boiling water for my wife. The Burmese came once or twice to demand that I go as a porter. When they went away from my house, I thought about how if they forced me to go portering I wouldn’t know how long I’d have to carry their things. So after they were gone, I jumped down from the house and fled from the village in the night. I didn’t dare go back home.”*** - Man from Wah Mi Klah village, northern Pa’an district (Interview #4, 9/98)

Current Thai policy toward refugees is to deny asylum to all arrivals except those deemed to be “fleeing from fighting”, and even they are only to be given shelter until the immediate fighting stops. Some of those who have crossed the border in small groups have been forced back at gunpoint by Thai troops, while others have slipped into the refugee camps. The largest groups of refugees arriving in August and September were told that they would have to enter Beh Klaw refugee camp or go back to Burma. Most of the group from the southeast are still camped along the border outside any refugee camp, still hoping to go back to harvest. Of the over 3,000 refugees from the destroyed villages further north in the Dawna, only 4 families chose to go to the camp. The others crossed back to the other side of the river into Burma, determined to try to get their harvest despite the destruction of their villages and the risk of attack by SPDC troops. Given the risk involved in going to their fields when they could be shot and the fact that their crops had been left untended for more than a month, it is unlikely that they will be able to salvage much of a crop even if they can get to their fields; however, their decision to attempt it shows the depth of their commitment to their land. They would never become refugees given any other possibility. Even so, given the current circumstances in eastern Pa’an district it is only likely that many more people will have to flee over the coming months of the dry season.

***“When I fled the first time they ordered me to come back and said that if I didn’t go back they would look for me, capture me and kill me. I didn’t care what they said, I kept fleeing. I tried to go to Beh Klaw [refugee camp in Thailand] because my brothers and sister are there, but the Thai soldiers forced me back to Burma.”*** - “Saw Kaw Ghay” (M, 31), villager from Myawaddy township now internally displaced (Interview #6, 8/98)

***“But if other villagers can still stay in the village, why couldn’t you stay?”***

***“Do not say that they can stay! They all want to flee from the village. For example my Aunt, her husband was killed, she has 3 small children and her old mother cannot walk. But she wanted to come, so I told her that after we’re here a few days I’ll go back and get her family.”*** - “Naw Lah Say” (F, 25), Taw Oak village, southern Pa’an district (Interview #12, 8/98)

## **Future of the Area**

***“I don’t think the Burmese will make peace. If the KNLA gives their guns to the Burmese, then the Burmese will only persecute us more easily and abuse us until we’re lost.”*** - “Pu Ler Muh” (M, 58), Meh Kreh village, northeastern Pa’an District (Interview #26, 4/98)

As long as the current struggle between the SPDC, DKBA and KNLA continues in the region, it is unlikely that things can do anything but get worse for the villagers there. The SPDC has made it very clear that they are determined to gain complete and iron-fisted control over this entire area and will stop at nothing to do it. They consistently refuse open negotiations with the KNU, and at the same time the KNU has stated clearly that it will never surrender and will continue to fight if there are no sincere negotiations. The KNLA has lost many of its soldiers and much of its access to arms, ammunition and supplies over the past 3 years, but it still operates effectively as a guerrilla force in several regions including eastern Pa’an district, throughout the Dawna Range and penetrating into the plains to the west. The KNLA no longer tries to hold territory, but it exerts a loose kind of control over some areas where the SPDC military doesn’t dare patrol except in large columns. When these columns come through, the villagers and the KNLA scatter into the hills only to return as soon as the column has passed. Knowing the fear of ambush of most SPDC officers, many villagers say they are relieved when a KNLA unit is around their village because they know that this makes it less likely that SPDC patrols will appear; groups of internally displaced villagers also often gravitate to KNLA units for a feeling of protection. The KNLA is assisted by the fact that most SPDC officers would rather spend their time making money than fighting while posted in the field, and want to return home alive to central Burma. For this reason these officers often avoid patrolling areas which they know are occupied by KNLA units, and fight their ‘battles’ against defenceless villagers instead; the villagers killed can then be reported to higher commands as KNLA casualties, and the guns which officers force village elders to obtain and hand over can be reported as weapons captured in battle. However, when direct orders come from above to relocate, attack and destroy villages the officers have no choice but to comply, and they do so in strength.

***“We have fought them for a long time; so if we give them our arms, that would be the same as killing ourselves.”*** - “Saw Po Htoo” (M, 23), KNLA soldier in Meh Th’Wah township talking about the SPDC offer for the KNLA to hand over their arms (Interview #23, 4/98)

The overall result is a complex cat-and-mouse situation, with both sides sometimes avoiding and sometimes ambushing the other, and the villagers always caught in the middle. The KNLA has

also used what it calls 'landmine warfare' intensively in eastern Pa'an District, with devastating effect on both the SPDC troops and the villagers.

The DKBA has made this situation much more complicated, particularly for the villagers. As one villager pointed out, "We're afraid of them even more than the Burmese, because they know everything about us"; meaning that the DKBA are from the villages, they speak the language, a few of them used to be KNLA and they know which villagers are which. The DKBA has a few strong leaders but a weak command structure, and many of their local units do little but extort money and food from villagers and act as guides and helpers to local SPDC units. When they operate as an organised force they fight for the SPDC, yet those who have been DKBA soldiers make it very clear that they do not trust the SPDC and even hate them. Most of them see the SPDC as a means to an end, hoping that once they help to wipe out the KNU they can get autonomy for Karen State as a concession from the SPDC, though this appears highly unlikely. The SPDC also has a strong dislike and distrust of the DKBA, provides them with very limited arms and ammunition and steadily decreasing supplies of food. If the SPDC keeps to its promise to cut off food supplies to Myaing Gyi Ngu at the end of 1998, the population of Myaing Gyi Ngu will certainly scatter though it is unclear what effect this will have on the DKBA; they would certainly be weakened, but they would most likely continue to exist.

There are also elements within the KNU and some other Karen organisations who want to open negotiations for an agreement with the DKBA, and some DKBA soldiers have said when interviewed that many of the DKBA members would welcome such an agreement if the 'old guard' leadership of the KNU were to step down. However, currently this 'old guard' leadership is opposed to negotiating with the DKBA as equals, offering only to accept the DKBA if it agrees to effectively surrender and come under the wing of the KNU/KNLA. As the 'old guard' shows no intention of stepping down soon, the situation is at a deadlock. Even if the obstacles disappeared and negotiations were planned, it is almost certain that the SPDC would do everything in its power to block such negotiations, including cutting off all DKBA supplies and possibly even a pre-emptive military strike against the DKBA.

***"They [villagers in Myaing Gyi Ngu] would like to work together with the KNU because we [all Karen] are all brothers and sisters. Some DKBA would also like to work with the KNU. They want to fight the Burmese. Some DKBA soldiers told me that if the KNU joined together with them they would fight the Burmese together."*** - "Saw Ghay Htoo" (M, 20+), human rights monitor who visited Myaing Gyi Ngu describing what people told him there (Interview #30, 4/98)

Taking all of these factors into account, it appears unlikely that the current situation in eastern Pa'an district will improve in the near future. The KNLA will probably rely more and more heavily on 'landmine warfare', the SPDC and DKBA will respond by further indiscriminate use of mines themselves, and the villagers will suffer the results. As its village destruction and relocation campaigns fail to undermine KNLA activities, the SPDC will probably expand these campaigns into other areas throughout the Dawna, such as the Meh Kreh area in the north, and possibly into the villages on the western slopes of the Dawna as well. More villages would be destroyed, more villagers would be killed or become internally displaced in the hills, and more would flee to Thailand.

Thai policy on refugees will probably only become more restrictive. Thai authorities are currently continuing the process of consolidating the refugee camps into larger and more tightly controlled areas, and it is becoming harder all the time for newly arrived refugees to gain entry to

these camps. In future, most of those who arrive in small groups into remote areas will probably have to choose between slipping into the illegal labour market in border towns or being forced back across the border by Thai troops. For those who arrive in large enough groups to attract international notice and for those who make it into the camps, they may be granted temporary refuge. Thai authorities are now allowing officials of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) access to the camps, but most of the negotiations have been conducted behind closed doors between the Thai government and Army and UNHCR, with no refugee or aid organisation representatives allowed to attend. One of UNHCR's responsibilities will be to 'screen' the refugees, and they have already proven with refugees from Cambodia, Laos and northwestern Burma that they 'screen out' most people. Many refugees and observers fear that the UNHCR plans to label most Karen refugees as not having legitimate claims to asylum, and would then put its seal of approval on a large-scale forced repatriation of Karen refugees by Thai authorities. This is essentially what the UNHCR has already done to Rohingya Muslim refugees from Burma in Bangladesh, showing that they are more interested in establishing a firm presence in Burma than in helping refugees to obtain asylum in neighbouring countries.

For the villagers of eastern Pa'an District, their situation is only likely to get worse in the near future unless there is fundamental political change in Burma. Until this occurs their lives will rotate around uncertainty, fear, flight - and possibly forced return.



## **Index of Interviews**

This list breaks down the interviews referenced in this report by region. All names of those interviewed have been changed. Page numbers given are from the Annex containing the full text of the interviews, which is available on request. **FL** = Forced Labour, **FR** = Forced Relocation, **IDP** = Internally Displaced Person(s).

## Central-Eastern Dawna Region

<u>#</u>	<u>Pg.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Village</u>	<u>Subject</u>
1	6	"Pa Shwe"	M	29	Po Ti Pwa	SPDC columns came and looted and burned his whole village in September, all villagers fled, arrest and detention of pregnant woman, he had to go many times as a porter, FL at Army camps, extortion, burning of other villages
2	8	"Saw Joseph"	M	34	Meh Keh	SPDC burning of villages in area, killing of livestock, SPDC troops and porters wounded by mines, flight to Thailand, abuse of porters in earlier times
3	10	"Saw Pler Hai"	M	31	Meh Lah Ah	Shelling and burning of Meh Lah Ah by SPDC in
		"Pa Li Kloh"	M	21	Tee K'Haw	September, flight of villagers, looting of food supplies and belongings, FL for DKBA, FL as porters and at Army camp for SPDC, use of porters as minesweepers, landmines, "Pa Li Kloh"'s sister wounded by KNLA mine while fleeing, SPDC/DKBA relations, IDPs
4	14	"Naw Paw Htoo"	F	45	Wah Mi Klah	Arrival of SPDC column in their village in September,
		"Saw Ghay Htoo"	M	?	Wah Mi Klah	caught and interrogated by SPDC troops, looting of her food and belongings, flight of other villagers, only elderly and blind left behind, flight into the hills, found by the SPDC and arrested to be a porter, later escape and flight to Thailand, treatment of those caught as porters, torture of Klay Po Kloh headman, arrest and detention of pregnant woman, random killings of villagers by SPDC, threats by DKBA

## Southeastern Pa'an District

<u>#</u>	<u>Pg.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Village</u>	<u>Subject</u>
5	18	"Saw G'Lee Taw"	M	31	xxxx	Fleeing village because of portering, FL for all sides
		"Saw Tha Htoo"	M	17	xxxx	and extortion by SPDC until no money left, flight of
		"Mugha Lah K'Taw"	F	?	xxxx	other villagers
6	19	"Saw Kaw Ghay"	M	31	xxxx	FL as porters, abuse of porters, extortion, meeting by DKBA to order all villagers to help build their new office in Myawaddy, flight to Thailand, forced repatriation by Thai troops, flight again, now IDP
7	21	"Naw Muh Lah"	F	23	Sgaw Ko	She had her leg blown off by a DKBA

landmine near her field in February when 8 months pregnant; mis-treatment in Myawaddy hospital and subsequent premature birth of her baby; shooting and wounding of her husband and nephew in the fields by DKBA

<u>#</u>	<u>Pg.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Village</u>	<u>Subject</u>
8	22	"Pa Kloh"	M	28	xxxx	Flight into the hills due to FL and extortion, portering for DKBA
9	22	"Saw Kweh"	M	31	Thay Maw Gu	Captured in his field in July by DKBA and SPDC, taken as porter, abuse, lack of food and rest, flight from his village, looting of his house by SPDC, FL for SPDC and DKBA, failure of crop due to FL, inability to pay fees anymore and subsequent flight, now IDP
10	24	"Naw Kler"	F	21	Taw Oak	FL as porters for SPDC and DKBA, abuse while
		"Saw Tha Dah"	M	27	Taw Oak	portering, increasing SPDC extortion now 700 Kyat/month/family, inability to pay, FR orders for end of harvest, curfew on farmers, restrictions on taking food to field huts, fear of landmines, looting of livestock, SPDC beatings and shootings of villagers, DKBA shot at "Saw Tha Dah" in the fields, shot dead his 2 friends then laid mines around their bodies, execution of another Taw Oak villager by SPDC, flight from the village
11	27	KHRG monitor	M		Pa'an district	Report on the situation based on a trip through southern Pa'an district in August; SPDC extortion, human minesweepers, death of human minesweepers, loss of livestock to landmines, crop problems, shooting of 6-year-old girl, lack of access to medicines and education, villagers fleeing
12	30	"Naw Lah Say"	F	25	Taw Oak	FL as porters for SPDC and DKBA, SPDC/DKBA cooperation, excessive extortion, orders to move, use of women and children as minesweepers, shooting deaths of her uncle and cousin by DKBA, villagers wounded and killed by landmines, difficulty of fleeing the village, flight of many villagers
13	31	"Saw Tha Wah"	M	42	Taw Oak	FL as porters for SPDC and DKBA, abuse of porters, demands for money, extortion of rice, porters dying from landmines, SPDC killing villagers, plans for FR
14	33	"Pa Weh Doh"	M	47	Taw Oak	DKBA meeting to announce FR of all villages, looting of livestock, going as porters and minesweepers for SPDC, death of Sgaw Ko headman by landmine, DKBA abuses
15	34	"Maung Nyunt"	M	40	Taw Oak	Description of the death of his wife's mother by a landmine, and how his wife's father lost a leg to another landmine

16 35 "Naw Sghee"

F 25 Taw Oak

SPDC killing of livestock and looting of food, extortion, brutal torture of innocent villagers, shooting death of her uncle, deaths and casualties from landmines, orders for porters and payment to avoid going, use of women and children as human minesweepers and shields, flight of villagers, SPDC killings of her first husband and her brother, both sons of a woman in the the village and others

<u>#</u>	<u>Pg.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Village</u>	<u>Subject</u>
17	37	"Saw Tee Kaw"	M	?	Pah Klu	His arrest by DKBA and detention with hard labour, including portering, witnessed soldiers looting villages, threatening villagers and using them as FL while a porter, abuse of porters, forced to go as a human shield in battle, looting and killing by DKBA, FL in Myaing Gyi Ngu, escape from Myaing Gyi Ngu, extortion and FL back in his village, shootings of villagers by DKBA and SPDC, including shooting dead a 6-year-old girl, subsequent arrest, torture and imprisonment of innocent villagers they'd shot, flight
18	40	"Pi San San"	F	50	Taw Oak	Flight from village because of extortion demands, orders for porters or money, looting of food, DKBA torture of villagers, SPDC/DKBA orders for FR, killings of villagers, capture of villagers to be porters, opinions on DKBA, fleeing in secret
19	44	"Pi Hser Mo"	F	50	Pah Klu	Interrogation by SPDC about another villager, threats, flight of the village head, fleeing the village in secret, taxation of village by all sides, portering, use of her daughter as a porter, FR, SPDC beatings of villagers, DKBA shootings of farmers, SPDC beating farmers to death
20	47	"Pi Wah K'Paw"	F	60	Htee Wah Blaw	Use of her daughters and son-in-law as porters, problems with crops this year, restrictions on farmers, looting of livestock, abuse of village heads, problems with illness

### **Northeastern Pa'an District & Myaing Gyi Ngu**

<u>#</u>	<u>Pg.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Village</u>	<u>Subject</u>
21	49	"Naw Lay Ghay"	F	23	xxxx	IDPs in the forest since DKBA burned their village
		"Pati Kyaw San"	M	45	xxxx	two years ago
22	50	"Pu Law Tee"	M	60	xxxx	Flight of most people from their village to become IDPs, SPDC demands for livestock and porters, fear that SPDC will return to stay around the village
23	51	"Saw Po Htoo"	M	23	xxxx	Killings of villagers by DKBA and SPDC in the Meh Th'Wah area, forcing villagers to cut bamboo for them to sell, FL as road sentries, DKBA/SPDC relations, U Thuzana, opinions on DKBA, conditions in Myaing Gyi Ngu

24	53	"Pati Lah Say"	M	43	Meh Kreh	FL at SPDC camp, demands for food and livestock, portering, killings of villagers by SPDC, burnings of all villages 10 years ago and then again, landmine deaths, lack of monastery and school
25	56	"Pu Kaw Soe"	M	50	Kwih Law Ploh	Regular interrogations by SPDC, FL at SPDC camp, villagers joining DKBA, opinions on DKBA, lack of medical help and schools
26	58	"Pu Ler Muh"	M	58	Meh Kreh	SPDC interrogations and looting of livestock, FL, DKBA eating livestock, villagers killed by KNLA landmines, lack of school and hospital

<u>#</u>	<u>Pg.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Village</u>	<u>Subject</u>
27	60	"Naw Nah Muh"	F	?	Meh Kreh	Burning of her former village, fear of SPDC retaliation if they build a school, FL at SPDC camp, DKBA looting livestock, will flee if SPDC comes
28	61	"Pu Ler Doh"	M	50	Meh Ko Kee	Flight from former village because SPDC tortured villagers and burned houses, fear that they will come to new village, fear of DKBA
29	62	"Saw Htoo Kler"	M	23	xxxx	Forced to join DKBA in 1995, fighting with KNLA, information on DKBA and Myaing Gyi Ngu, fled and joined KNLA, took part in March 98 KNLA attack on Myaing Gyi Ngu
30	65	"Saw Ghay Htoo"	M	20	xxxx	Human rights monitor who visited Myaing Gyi Ngu in Feb/Mar 98; FL for SPDC on main roads through Pa'an district, Myaing Gyi Ngu, life and opinions of villagers in Myaing Gyi Ngu, DKBA/SPDC relations
31	68	"Saw Kaw Doh"	M	19	Kwih Lay	Villager from near Myaing Gyi Ngu who left to join KNLA after being tortured by SPDC in early 1998; SPDC arrests of people in his village, his arrest, interrogation and physical and psychological torture by SPDC, extortion of money, food and materials by DKBA, DKBA logging, opinions on DKBA, school situation, situation in Myaing Gyi Ngu, refugee camp attacks, description of his part in KNLA attack on Myaing Gyi Ngu in March 98

### **Other: Kawkareik & Western Pa'an District**

<u>#</u>	<u>Pg.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Village</u>	<u>Subject</u>
32	72	"Maung San Myint"	M	45	Sittaun town, Mon State	Life in Sittaun town, low pay, difficulty of survival for workers at Sittaun paper factory, his departure to find work in Kawkareik as a trishaw driver, extortion and FL for SPDC in both Sittaun and Kawkareik, FL on roads, railway, at army camps and as porters, flight to find work in Thailand
33	74	"Pa Ler Wah"	M	30	Kaw B'Naw	SPDC stopping cars on Kawkareik-Myawaddy road
		"Saw Lah"	M	25	Huay Kalo	to catch porters, extortion by SPDC and DKBA in his home village north of Pa'an, intimidation, arrest and detention of village headman, FL on rubber plantation for retired SPDC officer, FL at SPDC camp and



providing building materials, extortion for Salween bridge at Myaing Galay, opinions on DKBA

34 78 "Naw Ghay Wah" F 31 Pay Yay

Teacher from western Pa'an district; impossibility of surviving even on two teachers' salaries (her and her husband), SPDC extortion, FL as porters, abuse and killing of porters, SPDC units hiring bandits to steal for them, forced extortion of fish farm harvest by SPDC, FL at rubber plantation and building road, FL on Salween bridge at Myaing Galay, flight south to Doooplaya district, abuse during 'Border Areas Development' teacher training, theft of her salary, SPDC looting of livestock, fled to Thailand after her children became sick and they had no more money