

# The Mon Forum

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## Some Acronyms in This Issue

DKBA-Democratic Karen  
Buddhist Army

KNU- Karen National Union

KNLA- Karen National Liberation  
Army

KNLA-Karen National  
Liberation Army

SLORC-State Law and Order  
Restoration Council

SPDC- State Peace and  
Development Council

IB - Infantry Battalion

LIBs- Light Infantry Battalions

VPDC-Village Peace and  
Development Council

AMRDP- All Mon Regions  
Democracy Party

## News

### VPDC chairmen reluctant to collect student distinction taxes

*Hong Dein, IMNA :*

Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC) chairmen around Mon State complain that they are uncomfortable taxing village residents for funds that are awarded to Mon State high school graduates who have gained distinction on their 10-standard exams in 2010.

VPDC chairmen in Mudon Township reported to IMNA field reporters that the Burmese military regime has ordered Township authorities to each collect 4 million kyat to fund awards given to honored students. Mon State contains 10 townships and two sub-townships; VPDC chairman have been ordered to collect award taxes from villager residents and submit the funds to township authorities by today July 28th.

A VPDC chairman from Mudon township explained, "Each township has to pay 4 million kyat to Mon State authorities for awards for the high school students". He claimed that villages in Mudon Township were expected to submit between 80,000 and 100,000 kyat per village to township authorities.

VPDC chairmen around Mudon Township informed an IMNA field reporter that they were forced to collect the distinction taxes from citizens in their villages –between 2,000 and 3,000 kyat per household –despite the fact that they were reluctant to do so.

The Mudon Township VPDC chairman quoted above explained that



Mon students are seen in their class at a government run school in Ye Township, Mon State

## Ceasefire Concern, Security tightened in Gas Pipeline Areas

The situation in the southern part of Mon State has become increasingly unstable as senior SPDC military leadership has applied pressure to the New Mon State Party (NMSP) to reduce its armed wing, the Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA), into becoming a subservient border guard force or militia force. Tension increased within the NMSP after an April 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting in which a top SPDC commander invoked, for the 1<sup>st</sup> time since its formation, terms suggesting the “return to a pre-ceasefire relationship”.

When the military government pressured the NMSP to agree to a ceasefire in 1995, it was at a time when the Burmese Army was working to ensure security for company staff belonging to multi-national oil corporations, Unocal and Total, in order to construct the 60 miles long Yadana/Yetagun gas pipeline. Today the military government has a serious concern that if the ceasefire breaks, Mon and Karen insurgent forces can move up to the pipeline region.

In May and June of this year, the Burmese Army sent 7 companies of troops, or about 300 to 400 soldiers into the northern part of the Yadana/Yetagun pipeline, specifically along the Ye to Tavoy motor road and along the coastal regions in southern Ye and northern Yebyu Township. The military government is concerned for the gas pipeline, that if the MNLA troops break the ceasefire and co-operate with the Karen insurgents, they will threaten the security of the lucrative pipeline.

After the boosted security in the area of northern Yebyu Township of Tenasserim Division and southern Ye Township in Mon State, the Burmese Army has employed a multiple cut strategy to sever all types of supports by the local villagers to insurgent armed troops. This June, the Burmese Army has ordered the fencing of villages in Yebyu Township to prevent insurgent armed groups from accessing the villages. As a result villagers have lost their crops and property. They have no chance to prepare their plantations and orchards at the beginning of rainy season, when farmers traditionally prepare for a new season of growing. At the same time, villagers have to provide all types of assistance to Burmese Army soldiers who are based in their villages.

Finally, in order to ensure the protection of the whole gas pipeline project, and to control the whole area, there have been significantly more Burmese army soldiers active in Mon territory, increasing the suffering of the people – people who have not broken the 1995 ceasefire.

he and his fellow chairmen felt embarrassed about collecting the distinction taxes from village residents because villagers are already required to submit funds for a wide variety of purposes. These include funds used to support security patrols for the Kanbawk – Myaingkalay gas pipeline that runs through Mon State, forced labour costs, and village militia taxes. “We have a feeling of discomfort about collecting money frequently from villagers”, this chairman explained. According to a high school teacher from Thanbyzaryat Township, a visit from Southeast Command (SEC) Commander Thet Naing Win is expected near the end

of July, the same time of year when he visited Mon State high schools in 2009. Thet Naing Win will distribute prizes to students who gained distinction in four or more of their subject exams. This teacher reported that in the year 2010, four students passed with six distinctions (otherwise known as full distinction), thirty-seven students passed with five distinctions, and 141 students passed with four distinctions. Schools in which over 50 percent of exam takers passed all of their exam will be, as in previous years, also be awarded a prize of 1 million kyat.

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## Mon party's campaign dogged by government surveillance

Kong Janoi, IMNA :

Representatives from the All Mon Regions Democracy Party (AMRDP) are finding that Burmese government surveillance measures are stifling their campaign activities.

According to IMNA field reporters, AMRDP leading organizers Nai Nwe Soe and Nai Baya Aung Moe are being closely monitored by a regional Military Intelligence Unit this week during their campaign in Myiek Township, Tenasserim Division. Witnesses from around Mon State report that that all AMRDP

representatives have been followed by the Military Intelligence office in every Township they visit during their campaign, which began in late June. The party has reportedly been troubled by the Burmese Election Commission's requirement that all campaign activities be reported to the Commission in advance.

“Last week, when they [AMRDP campaigners] were organizing people in Mudon town, they faced

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## Report

# “THEY THINK WE ARE NOT HUMAN”: STRATEGIC ABUSES THREATEN LOCAL ECONOMY

### Summary

This month the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) documents the perpetuation of human rights violations by the State Peace and Development Council's (SPDC's) army units that are reminiscent of the previous anti-insurgent '4-cuts' policy. Despite the supposed discontinuation of these systematized abuses, research clearly indicates that these violations are continually put in use to target ethnic groups located in the southern part of Mon State and northern part of Tenasserim Division.

Starting in early May 2010 for over a two and a half month period, the four SPDC battalions LIB No. 282, No. 273, No. 299, IB No. 31, ordered travel restrictions against villages in northern Tenasserim Division and Southern Mon state on four separate occasions. In addition, HURFOM has confirmed that in four cases SPDC forces also defined restricted boundaries outside of villages in which villagers had to relocate their homes. Governmental army units have conducted a campaign of travel restrictions, arbitrary taxation, forced labor and forced relocation. These human rights violations threaten the local economy, security and livelihood of the residents in a specific attempt to suppress the influence and capacity of local insurgent armed groups based in the area. The consequences of these targeted violations are that villagers and owners of farms, plantations, and orchards have been deliberately undermined and had their financial stability disrupted, subsequently leaving farmers and plantation owners financially crippled, and at times forced to move to more stable regions of Mon State.

### Background

In the late 1960's and early 70's the then ruling military junta, the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), instituted the 'Four cuts' policy (Pya Ley Pya in Burmese), that successfully undermined insurgent forces belonging to Karen and Mon political parties. While the agreement to a ceasefire between the New Mon State Party (NMSP) in 1995 officially ended the hostilities with the Burmese military junta, the ceasefire failed to guarantee the well-being of communities on the periphery of Mon territory. Due to the continued presence of insurgent Mon splinter factions and Karen armed units, the Burmese military government, reconstituted in 1989 as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) declared nearly 90 percent of the territory in northern Tenasserim Division and southern Mon State a "black area" or a "free fire zone", in which military units were given free reign to carry out policies of extortion, seizure of goods and land, arrest, rape, torture, and even summary execution.

Since HURFOM's inception, its field reporters have documented the extensive and continuous abuses committed by SPDC battalions against villagers, often regardless of the verifiable presence of insurgent forces. These insurgent groups' presence in the area since the days of the '4-cuts' policy have been few, and ever decreasing in number compared to the presence of Burmese army battalions. Currently active insurgent forces are predominantly the Mon insurgent splinter groups, the Hongsatoi Restoration Party (HRP, locally known as the Nai Hlone group), the Mon National Defence Army (MNDA), the Nai Bin group and the Nai Chan Dein group. In addition, units from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Brigade No. 4 are periodically active in the area. While most of these groups field fewer than 40 soldiers, the SPDC local army units

include LIB's No. 401, No. 402, No. 406, No. 409, coastal army units and LIB's No. 282 and 273 which operate under Military Operation Management Command (MOMC, "Sa Ka Kha" in Burmese) No. 8. These battalions have the capacity to field between 70 to 300 soldiers each at any one time.

The region of focus in this report, southern Mon State and Northern Tenasserin Division, is geographically mostly comprised of mountainous and hilly terrain. This difficult terrain is a natural gift to armed insurgent groups desiring to hide from their enemies. However, while the area is home to an abnormally high number of battalions, this is more due to government's demand for security over the presence of the Kanbauk to Mayingkalay natural gas pipeline, which provides significant foreign income for the military junta. According to analysis of the military movement in the area regarding the excessive positioning of military bases, issues surrounding pipeline security are the key causes behind the continuous commitment of human rights violations.

The industries of local rubber and betel-nut plantations, paddy fields and perennial fruit-orchards that employ local residents have been hard hit by the abuses documented in this report. HURFOM researchers have learned that 75% of these crops could not be harvested in the area due to travel restrictions ordered in the last two and a half months, according to the information gathered during interviews with residents. This research indicates that due to the severity of abuses, loss of crops and much needed income threatens a possible collapse of the areas agrarian economy.

## Methodology

This monthly report exposes a raft of human rights violations committed against local civilians over a two and a half month period. The research, conducted in and around the areas in which violations have occurred, has been impacted by the intensity of security conditions. As a result, information in this report is gathered from interviews with at least 25 victims from about 20 villages in southern Mon State and northern Tenasserin Division willing to risk providing information to HURFOM researchers. Because of these conditions, these personal accounts represent the wider abuses conducted in the area, and compose the most accurate available data gathered from within this region of Burma.

## Targeted Abuses

### Travel restrictions and work impact

According to local residents, orders beginning in May for the current wave of travel restrictions and village boundary restrictions were often for 24-hours a day, and limited trips for all purposes including those made by cultivators and daily workers to farms, plantations and orchards outside the village. Farms, plantations, and orchards are nearly always located outside of the village, where farmers and cultivators have space to sow fields and tend to crops. However, because of these travel restrictions, residents could no longer reach their farms, plantations and orchards. As a result these residents have reported that they are already experiencing significant financial hardship, both from being denied the opportunity work as day laborers, guards, and harvesters, as well as from the loss to crops due to lack of cultivation or theft.

From May 12<sup>th</sup> to May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010, villagers from four villages – Singu, Toe Thet Ywathit, Yinyel and Yindain – located in Khawzar sub-township, southern Mon State, were ordered not to go outside the village by the local army, Infantry Battalion (IB) No. 31. This order came after



accusations were made by IB No. 31 that the Mon insurgent group, the MNDA, was collecting food and recruits from these villages. Regarding with this topic, Nai Maung, 46, a hired-worker who works in plantations and Toe Thet Ywathit resident was interviewed in a safe place.

Banning travel outside the village is when [the soldiers] do not allow us to go outside village in a certain period. In my village, during the travel limitation on May 12<sup>th</sup>, the village was closed at 6 pm and opened at 6 am. This occurred up to May 15<sup>th</sup>. From May 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, the limiting period was from 9 pm to 6 am. According to the captain of Burmese army [IB] No. 31, it [the order] was due to secrete collection of food and recruits in the village by Mon insurgent groups. Therefore, as instructed by the higher officials, our villagers and three neighboring villages were banned from going outside [our] villages. Because of that order, hired-workers and persons like me who are hired to guard plantations could earn no money. My wife was ill and my children are still very young, so it was very difficult for me. After May 15<sup>th</sup>, Burmese army [IB] No. 31 gave



Villagers who have been trapped outside Magyi village during travel restrictions, wait to return to their homes after the Burmese battalion leaves

“village pass tickets” to persons who wanted to sleep in their plantations and want to work at night, [but to get this] they had to pay 500 kyat per night. I thought I should try to get a ticket, however, because they ordered [us] not to go outside village, I may accidentally be shot and die while I am guarding the plantation. So I decided not to try for a ticket. It was the right choice because the travel restriction order was canceled on May 19<sup>th</sup>. If not, my debt would be more than I have [even] now.

Nai Maung complained to HURFOM’s field reporter about his disappointment, that he had gone into debt of over 20,000 kyat (interest rate not included) to support his family because he hadn’t been able to work for the previous eight days. Like Nai Maung, Mi Eigyi, 53, who faced difficulty because of the order limiting travel outside the village at night, had to solve her livelihood problem by selling and pawning her property. She indicated to HURFOM’s field reporter that the resulting pressure has been severe, and one that has struck many in the community:

We are living in a hand-to-mouth situation, so we have not saved money like the others. Moreover, we have to earn more than our food expenditure because we have to pay various taxes – village militia fees, portering avoidance fees and force labor fees if you can’t go to work [as a forced porter or laborer]. And then there are many other demands which have to be paid necessarily. These all cost about five thousand to eight thousand (kyat) per month. If we can’t work at rubber plantations or can’t guard our plantation at night, what will we eat? With which money can we pay these demands? I had to sell five mu of gold (0.77 grams). I was very hard up this year. My sons are not old enough to go to Thailand, so they can’t earn money. As only my husband have earned money, if we are not allowed work outside village both during day and night, we have to sell our properties for food. If there is nothing to sell, we will die of

starvation. There is nothing else. Like me, most of the villagers face difficulty during the period of not being allowed to go outside the village. I feel miserable when I am talking about difficulty in the village. I think the difficulty is too much to speak of [for me].

According to the field researchers, bans on traveling outside villages, and limitations for travel to plantations, are more frequent in villages close to military bases in southern Mon State than villages farther away. Claiming threats to local security and making accusations of collusion between insurgent armed groups and residents, the local army, IB No. 31, has frequently restricted travel in Khawzar Township and its eight nearby villages as they are close to the army base. DaNiKyar, MaGyi, MiHtaw Hlarlay, Mi Htaw Hlargyi, Kapyar and other surrounding small villages which are situated near the border of Mon State and Tenasserin Division and are farther from SPDC military bases, face travel only when troops are able to reach their area on patrols. At these times battalions often make available “village pass tickets” to the villagers, charging them money in order to allow them to bypass the travel restriction order.



**Villagers trapped outside their village in northern Yebyu Township are seen weaving makeshift thatch roofing from tall grass in order to survive while the local battalion blocking the village**

However during these last two a half months, the combined troops of the local army IB No. 31 and LIB No. 299 reached DaNiKyar, MaKyi, MiHtaw Hlarlay, MiHtaw Hlargyi, Kapyar and Kapyar wa and took up positions within the villages. Since the end of May to June 5<sup>th</sup> the two battalions have ordered 24-hour travel restrictions and claim that Mon insurgent groups are active in the region. According to Nai Myo Aung, 30, who was interviewed on June 15<sup>th</sup>, if a resident wants to work outside village, he or she needs a “village pass ticket” with the signature of the commander or his representative, and to pay a cost of five hundred kyat per day. Nai Myo Aung had to pay two thousand five hundred kyat for a five-day ticket to work outside the village on his plantation.

Nai Lay Mart, a Koe Mile resident, who owns over one and half acres of durian plantation explained how the villagers face financial hardship because of the travel restriction, but also lose money if they choose to pay the army for a “village pass ticket” to risk tending to their crops:

Banning travel outside village is not permanent here.... the longest period lasts for ten days. The shortest period like this one lasts 5 days or one week. The most [frequent] reason they showed up is about the rebel groups. If they ban going outside the village, the villagers faced difficulty because most durian plantations in this region are in this village and there is quite a large number of people who work on perennial plantations like for oranges, mangosteens and betel-nut. If travel outside the village is frequently banned in this season, the persons like us who rely only on the money made in this season for the whole year, will turn a loss. The army made the “village pass ticket” for the villagers who want to collect the durian fruits and trade with their clients who come to the plantations and purchased these durian fruits. The cost [for the ticket] is five hundred kyat per day. I found that if you do not return in time, the biggest punishment is your not being allowed to re-enter the village and being tagged with a fine of fifty thousand kyat. The smallest punishment is you not being allowed to re-enter the village for one day and being tagged with a fine of three thousand and five hundred kyat – the cost [of a ticket] for one week. If they suspect you are contacting with rebel



groups and supporting them, besides the fine, you will be tortured. This happens very often in this village. The villagers assumed the “village pass ticket” helps unfairly earn money for the army. I’m speaking frankly – The rebel groups are not active near here but they [Burmese army] earned money in this way and we, villagers, have become slaves who serve them [Burmese army].

## Theft of crops from perennial plantations and fruit orchards

Due to the orders restricting travel, perennial plantation and fruit orchard owners have reported the theft of their crops by SPDC soldiers during their absence. Owners are reporting a significant loss in their investment in these fruit crops, which make up a key portion of their income during the off season months of their plantation’s growing period. Many villagers in southern Mon State and northern Tenasserin Division primarily rely on farming, rubber cultivation, and fishery growth, but use fruit trees such as durian, mangosteen and cashew plantations to supplement their incomes during their primary crops cultivation period. According to data collected by HURFOM’s researchers, 20% of these growers have suffered direct losses of crops due to theft by Burmese army soldiers during the travel restrictions.

The following villages, which are situated near the border of Mon State and Tenasserin Division, possess the majority of the regions durian plantations: Pauk Pinkwin, Koe Mile, Nhit Koe Koe (battalion headquarters of LIB No. 299), Taung Htake (battalion headquarters of LIB No. 282), Alae Sakhan, Kyauk Kadin, Lot Thine, Kyauk Talin, Yepu, Tharyar Mon, Mile 62, Mile 60, Mayan Chaung, Mi Kyaung Ile, and Kalane Aung villages.

On the morning of June 23<sup>rd</sup>, Nai Myo Aye and Mi Ma May [both are around about 30, and are husband and wife] who are Koe Mile residents in southern Ye, were allowed to go outside their village for three days though a “village pass ticket”. They explained to HURFOM’s field



Soldiers troop from LIB 273 are seen enforcing travel restrictions in northern Yebyu Township in June, 2010

reporter how their durian plantation which is located near LIB No. 299 had been abused during their absence due to the travel restriction, and the significant financial loss they face:

I assume that they (soldiers from LIB No. 299) banned travel outside village intentionally. Because the period of travel restriction coincided with the time that we pick the durian fruits and sell them. Since the time of our great grand parents we’ve had about 70 durian trees planted between rubber plants in the rubber plantation. We collect our Durian income for the whole year in this time. The loss is not small for us. You can imagine what it’s like. They limited travel for five days in the second week of May. At this time their soldiers (may be LIB No. 299) and IB No. 31 were skirmishing with the Mon group [HURFOM cannot confirm which group]. A lot of durian fruits from our village’s durian plantations were lost. We were disappointed when we found the skins of the durian fruits they [Burmese army] left

after eating them. Another travel restriction occurred in early June. Like in the past, the durian fruits were lost again. They not only ate the durian fruits, but according to some of my Karen friends, also took the durian fruits with them. I can't assess the damage on the other plantations...[but] at my durian plantation which has produced over 2,000 durian fruits in years past, but [this time] only about 400 to 500 durian fruits were left now. According to the current value, I lost millions of kyat. Now we had to get a "village pass ticket" before we left the village. It costs 500 (kyat) per day. We both had to get tickets. If they see that we are carrying the durian fruits back on our way home, I think we will need to pay [more money] again.

Like in the above case, Mehm Khun Seik, a Kyauk Talin resident, said that one and half months ago, LIB No. 282 and No. 273, based near his village, did not allow the durian plantation owners to harvest or trade fruits they had gathered:

We will lose a lot if we can't pick the durian fruits when they are ready to be harvested. The army has planned this because they intentionally limited travel to coincide with this period. If you assess the loss according to the current value, it was pretty much as much as we could lose. A standard durian fruit equates with 1800 kyat to 3000 kyat even if it is retailing in the plantation. The durian fruits are always lost during every travel limitation, though not at every plantation. The plantation which the troops cross losses more. Moreover, they chop down the branches they can't reach [easily]. Over a two month period, travel limitations are ordered two times: one by [No.] 282 and another by [No.] 273. As the durian fruits are ready to pluck at that time, many of them were stolen. It was ugly to see that my uncle's plantation was scattered with the skin of durian fruits they left after eating during the time of skirmishing the Mon rebel group. Moreover, unlike the previous year, the durian trees of this year does not fruit two times. I think it is due to the extremely high temperature of this summer. The durian trees fruited one time and the owner of durian plantation had to lose their fruits in this way, so their income will reduce this year.

## Forced Labor

While the vast majority of the villages in the region faced multiple instances of travel restrictions, at least four villages in southern Mon State and northern Tenasserin Division have faced abuses by the SPDC army, including forced portering and forced labor on the construction of a village fence, as well as day and night security duty. The fencing project around these affected villages are compounds designed to entirely encircle the village, an unusual order compared to previous demands for fence construction that required only partial fence construction. The apparent aim of the battalions that issued these orders is to segregate each village from outside contact not made through any of army controlled gates. Local residents are forced to construct this project using wood pillars, bamboo, iron nails, gathered with their own time, money and resources.

Workers from farms, plantations, paddy fields and fisheries who often cannot afford to pay their way out of the work due to their already hand to mouth subsistence income, have little choice in following orders given. Forced portering and labor undermines villagers' ability to survive by not only forcing them to work with out compensation, using their own resources to feed them selves, but more significantly taking them away from their own work that normally provides for their own livelihoods. Villagers who refuse or are unable to filly these duties are punished severely, ranging from heavy fines, and instance that the work is filled, to heavy fines and arrest, or torture.

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, Captain Tun Min and adjutant officer Captain Ye Khine from the local IB No. 31 ordered the villagers from TaMok Kayine, Magyi, Mi Htaw Hlar Gyi and Da Ni Kyar (all



situated in southern Ye) via their village head man, to fence repair or rebuild fences around each village. To fill the order, villagers had to cut many tons of wood and bamboo to repair or rebuild the village compound, despite the fact that the surrounding fences in many of villages had only been constructed four years ago.

Nai Takhee, 40, who recently fled from DaNi Kyar village with his family to relocate with in the liberated area, commented on the difficulties such orders cause families:

The villagers have to work in rotation. They had to go there and work in groups: groups making the fence, groups digging the holes, groups searching for wood-pillars and bamboos for fencing. After the day [when they] received their orders, the villagers could not work for their food [to provide for themselves. They had to work there [constructing the fence instead]. The fence was not finished yet when I fled from there.



**Danikyar village, pictured here, has faced travel restrictions by IB 31 during May and June, 2010**

For some villages, finding resources to construct the fence takes significant time and energy. In some cases villagers must bring timber for fence posts from over a mile away by their own labor. According to U Anai, a Tavoy Township resident, who currently lives in Alae Sakhan

village:

Unlike in the past, the bamboo now does not grow near the village. Wood is [also] very scarce now. To fill the duty for my household, I have to purchase five wood-pillars which cost over twenty thousand (kyat). It was lucky for our village not to build (a new fence). We had to repair the damaged part. It was finished now. Even [though the fence] was finished, day and night guarding around the village still exists now.

U Anai also reported that despite fence construction being completed in the following villages, 24 hour guard duty rotation has continued in the following villages: Pauk Pinkwin, Koe Mile, Nhith Koe Koe (299) (where primary school and battalion situate), Taung Htake (LIB No.282), Alae Sakhan, Kyauk Kadin, Lot Thine, Kyauk Talin, Yepu, Tharyar Mon, Mile 62, Mile 60, Mayan Chaung, Mi Kyaung Ile, Kalane Aung, Kan Bauk, YeNgan Gyi, Zinswe, Sack Taw, Lae Gyi, Moe Gyi, Kwe Tone Nyi Ma, Cha Pone, Amae, Sein Pone, Paya Tone zu, Ywar Thit, Hlae Gate, Pa Nan Pone, Win Nite, Kha Yine, Saw Wone, Thae Chaung, KaLok, Haung Gon, KawHlaing, ZinGu, Toe Thet Ywar Thit, Yin Yae, Yin Dane, Yin Dane Chaung Wa, Mi Htaw Hlar Gyi, Mi Htaw Hlar Ngae, Ma Gyi and Da Ni Kyar<sup>1</sup>.

U Maung Noe, a cultivator over 50 years old, who lives in Zinzwe village, highlighted the lack of control residents feel when faced with forced labor orders. Villagers who have no income often

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<sup>1</sup> HURFOM has only been able to confirm the orders for fence construction and forced relocation in 4 villages. This longer list is included as the individual observation and local knowledge of the resident U Anai, as interviewed by HURFOM's field reporter.

face little opportunity to resist these direct orders:

Guarding during the day is a little more convenient because we don't lose sleep. We have to knock the alarm hourly [at night time]. After one gate starts knocking the alarm, the other gates in the south, west and north have to knock the alarm too. This means the gates are in contact. If one gate starts knocking the alarm, but you are absent [from your post with the bell], you will be punished the next morning. The punishment may be of various sorts – torture, tagging fine of ten thousand (kyat) or re-guarding the gate for the whole week. It is necessary that we obey the order because it comes from the mouth of the commander. I'm telling you that they think we are not human. We have to follow as they instruct, and we have to suffer as they abuse us:

According to a military analyst and observer based in Alae Sakhan village, it is likely that the sudden emphasis for the SPDC army on rebuilding fences is to limit the guerrilla warfare tactics of the MNDA who is active in this region. The goal would be to have more control over checking the activity of residents. He highlighted to HURFOM, the role of the current policy appears to be similar to that of the '4-cuts' policy, as the current revival of abuses is intended to regulate information flow, to cut rations, support and human resources support between insurgent groups and residents.

## Forced Relocation

Besides the maintenance and construction of these village perimeter fences, local SPDC battalions have enacted a policy of forcing houses outside these fences to relocate within the boundaries. The goal of this forced relocation is to cut possible supply attempts and contact between the insurgent forces and civilians. In instances within larger villagers where a battalion cannot ensure control of the entire perimeter, fences are rebuilt to fit the sphere they can control. House owners that have the misfortune of being designated outside this perimeter must pay for their home to be deconstructed and rebuilt on available land within the fenced limits. Many homes have been established for years and are built of heavy wood and bricks. The result is a huge cost, both financially and in time, as the process requires many hours of manual labor, the purchase of new land or a donation from another resident, and then the difficult reconstruction of the home during the height of the rainy season.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> week of July in Pauk Pin Kwin village, northern Yebyu Township, due to this order of forced relocation by Captain Zaw Lwin from LIB No. 273, about 15 households were required to move from their original plots of land in outlying parts of the village to within the village fence. HURFOM's field reporters have documented how the owners of these 15 houses moved to available spaces in the village, or fled.

Nai Kalar, 53, a Pauk Pin Kwin resident, who has since relocated to the liberated area (territory controlled by the NMSP), explained how he and his family were subject to the forced relocation, and had no alternative but to flee as a result:

Captain Zaw Lwin from the army. Captain who moved from No. 282. Now he is in No. 273. He and his privates ordered me to move my house into the village fence. My house has been existing in the lateral part of the village for 17 years. I can't follow the order. Because firstly I need to dismantle my house. Secondly, I need workers and money. And then, in the rainy season, even they allow to re-build a new house if a space is available, I have to hire workers and have to cost money again. It is not easy. Moreover, we have been abused and oppressed continuously. So I can't follow the order and fled to here with my family. Four households who have to be moved their houses accompanied me. No one can stand (the abuses) and fled from the village.

## Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

The Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1995 by a group of young Mon people. The main objectives of HURFOM are:

- monitoring the human rights situations in Mon territory and other areas Southern Burma,
- protecting and promoting internationally recognized human rights in Burma

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM produces the monthly "Mon Forum" newsletter. If publication is delayed it is because we are waiting to confirm information, and it comes with our heartfelt apologies.

We encourage you to write to us if you have feedback or if you know someone who you think would like to receive the newsletter. Please email or mail a name and address to:

HURFOM, P. O. Box 2237, General Post Office  
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With regards,

Director  
Human Rights Foundation of Monland

### News from page No.2....

a problem with authorities because they [the AMRDP] informed the [Election] Commission that they would give a speech with two people. In the campaign meeting, when the audience asked a question of their party, one of their members, whose name had not been given to the authorities, talked to the public, so the authorities gave a warning to their party," a Mudon town witness reported.

"I would like to ask them why pro-junta party like Union Solidarity and Development and Ethnic Unity Party is free to do anything without any restriction from the government," he added.

Despite pressure from Burma's military regime, Nai Ngwe Thein, the leader of the AMRDP believes that the party will ultimately be successful in gaining votes in Mon State.

"We will definitely win the [parliamentary] seat in Mon State if there are free and fair elections, because

as far as we know, many people don't like the pro-junta party. People will only vote to pro-junta party if they feel a threat [from the Burmese government]. We have to explain our people not to afraid to vote to our party," he explained to IMNA's field reporters in an interview this month.

According to IMNA field reporters observe situation in Mon State, many people are increasingly enthusiastic about casting their votes in favor of the AMRDP.

Nai Tun, a resident of Mudon Township, said, "Although we see this election is not fair, when the Mon party will come up for elections in our region, we will vote for them because our votes will go only for the Mon Party which we believe will care for our people."

A political observer from Rangoon named Nai Htaw Mon explained to IMNA that even one member of the AMRDP in Burma's parliament will likely increase the Mon people's cultural rights.

"If we look at the Mon culture and literature aspect, it will be freer to learn and teach after the election [if even one AMRDP member is elected]. Politically speaking, if the Mon Party will properly get elected at last, with ten members, what they can do is be a voice in parliament with that amount of people." The AMRDP was formed in April 2010; the group is currently the only Mon political group campaigning in Mon State and Mon-controlled areas in the 2010 Burmese elections.



Min Nwe Soe is seen speaking at a podium about his book in 2009



## Conclusion

Having last documented abuses in the northern Tannaserim Division and southern Mon State area 8 months ago, HURFOM's research indicates that abuses by SDPC battalions not only continue but have increased. This raft of apparently intentional increased abuses mimics that of the '4-cuts' policy undertaken prior to the 1995 ceasefire, during which the Burmese junta waged open war against the ethnic communities.

Troublingly, these current abuses over the last few months have particularly targeted local residents, who are treated as tantamount to being insurgent forces.

These '4-cuts' like abuses have significantly increased economic hardship and threatened the livelihoods and security of some of the hardest hit communities

in the region. Travel restrictions have hampered crucial plantation and farm cultivation during key periods of development and harvest, causing financial losses for villagers who are already some of the most financially vulnerable in their communities. Adding further insult to injury, the theft of fruit crops from farmers undermines their supplemental incomes used to support their families between rubber and other non-perennial crop rotation. Moreover, the SPDC battalions further their anti-insurgent policy by forcing villagers to perform costly repairs and construction of boundary fences as well as deconstruction and relocation of family homes. These financially devastating costs are in some cases too much for families to afford, and many have to instead abandon their homes and relocate to the NMSP's liberated area.

These abuses continue and even appear to have increased at a time when tension has mounted surrounding the role of ethnic groups, due to the approach of the 2010 Burmese elections. Damage to the livelihoods of area laborers, and the farm, plantation, and orchard owners engendered by these abuses is a severe threat to the long-term survivability of these communities. HURFOM hopes to highlight that what ever change is brought by the elections within the remaining months of 2010, the issue of abuses in northern Tannaserim and Southern Mon State will likely remain, and will require real commitment by the government to resolve these abuses' lasting effects.



A hut in a betel nut plantation is seen after it was destroyed by LIB 282 during recent travel restrictions in northern Yebyu Township.

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