

Relief trip uncovers ongoing abuses in SPDC-controlled areas of Central Shan State

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By the Shan NGO Coordinating Centre

The information in this report was collected by a relief team that traveled to Central Shan State during mid-2004 to provide emergency assistance to displaced villagers in the area. Most of the incidents happened in or near Laikha Township.

Most of the villagers in this area have been displaced since the mass forced relocation by the junta's troops began in 1996. Many fled to Thailand, some hid in the jungle and some went to the relocation camps on the main roads.

Today, it is estimated that under half of the original population remains in Laikha Township. Some of the relocated villagers have been attempting to settle back near their former homes, and cultivate their former fields, but dare not live too far from main roads, for fear of being linked to the Shan resistance.

Yet, as the following incidents show, even staying close to SPDC-controlled roads and towns does not guarantee security for the civilians in this area. Indiscriminate torture, rape and killing by SPDC patrols from numerous battalions is continuing to occur, and villages are still being relocated. This is in spite of the presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the area since late 2002.

Here are some examples.



the MI officer radioed to the soldiers did the torture stop. Later an ICRC team came to the village and sewed up the faces of the four men. In April 2004, a middle-aged farmer was eating his lunch in a field when he was shot and killed by a patrol of SPDC troops.

In March 2004, four Shan farmers were arrested after fighting occurred between Shan resistance and SPDC troops in the same village tract. The soldiers accused the farmers of supporting the Shan troops. When the farmers denied this, the SPDC soldiers started kicking them and slashed their faces with bayonets. The village headman raced to town on a motorbike and begged the MI officer there to stop the torture. Only when



In April 2004, a group of villagers were making merit one evening at their village temple. About 50 SPDC soldiers arrived and suspected that Shan troops were inside. They opened fire at houses and shelled the temple with mortars. A 5-year-old boy tried to run to his house but was shot in the legs and his calf was badly wounded. The soldiers realized their mistake and let the boy be taken to a nearby hospital, but did not let him be taken to the better-equipped Laikha in case news of the incident leaked out. Two novices and two monks were injured by shrapnel in the same attack.



In May 2004, several villages in Nong Kaw tract of Laikha which had already been relocated several times since 1996 were forced by SPDC troops to move again, within 5 days. At their new site, they have once again had to rebuild their houses and clear land for farming.



New relocation site

In June 2004, 3 Shan youth were traveling back to Laikha town on motorcycles after visiting their former village. Along the way, two youth had to stop to pick up a dropped bag. The other boy continued on his motorbike. Just after that, the two who had stopped heard gun shots. They were so scared they turned back. The next day the lone boy did not show up and so the two youth went back to look. They found their friend's body covered in leaves and took the body to the hospital. The doctors took out MA1 bullets used by SPDC guns.

In June



Similar events happened in 2003.

In June 2003, a Shan woman and her husband were traveling from their village to their field when a SPDC patrol found them. Some soldiers grabbed the man and took him away. The other 10 soldiers then beat the woman half-unconscious and raped her one after another. When they were finished they ripped out and stole her gold ear-rings. Her husband was later released after being beaten.

Also in 2003, a young Shan woman who had gone to work in her field went home early because she was sick. On the way a SPDC soldier who was looking for food grabbed her and raped her. Just then a Shan villager came to them. The SPDC soldier fired his gun at the man but missed. After the rape the woman became mentally unbalanced and now runs in panic whenever she hears news of SPDC. She has become facially disfigured due to injuries suffered when fleeing in this way.





In another case, an SPDC patrol arrested a Shan villager on suspicion of helping the Shan resistance. He denied the charge and so the troops beat him with rifle butts and left him for dead in the jungle outside his village. Fortunately he survived.

One village headman who had met with ICRC twice during their visits to the area was arrested by SPDC in September 03. He had been interrogated by the SPDC after each ICRC visit about what he had told the organization. In September 2003, he was arrested on charges of supporting the Shan resistance. He was sent to Taunggyi prison where he remains to this day. ICRC supports his family to visit him in Taunggyi.

These are just some of the incidents documented by the relief team, and represent only a random sampling of the local population. It is clear that many more abuses remain undocumented.

These incidents provide clear evidence of the ongoing lack of security for men, women and children in areas under SPDC control in Central Shan State, and explain why refugees continue to flow from this area into Thailand.

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Appendix

Summary of abuses documented by relief team

Human rights abuse	Township	Date of abuse	SPDC unit (if known)
Extrajudicial killing			
Killing of farmer in field hut	Kunhing	2-Apr-04	IB 246
killing of high school student	Laikha	19-Jun-04	--
Sexual violence			
gang rape near village temple	Laikha	15-Jun-03	LIB 427
gang rape in field hut	Laikha	1-Oct-03	--
rape causing insanity	Laikha	2003	IB 382
Random violence, torture			
4 villagers' faces slashed by bayonets	Laikha	13-Mar-04	LIB 515
5-yr-old boy shot in leg	Murung Nawng	20-Apr-04	IB 286
4 monks injured by shrapnel	Murung Nawng	20-Apr-04	IB 286
Torture by suffocation and beating	Laikha	2003	LIB 332
Villager beaten to near death	Laikha	2003	LIB 332
Unjust imprisonment			
Imprisonment of headman visited by ICRC	Murung Nai	3-Sep	IB 248

Note on names and locations: Only the names and exact locations of villagers who were killed have been included. Since the other victims of human rights abuses are all still living in the area, and are vulnerable to SPDC repercussions if their identities are exposed, their names and exact village locations have not been included in this report.

Details of cases:

Extrajudicial Killing

Killing of farmer in field hut

Name: Loong Tab Loo

Aged: 41 years

Sex: male

Ethnicity: Shan

Occupation: Farmer

Village of origin: Nam Tord village, W. Kunhing Township

Location of incident (killing): hill field near Nam Tord village

Date of incident: April 2, 2004

Perpetrators: SPDC troops from IB 246

Details: Killed while eating his midday meal in his field hut.



2. Killing of high school student

Name: Phu Wei Baing

Aged: 20 years

Sex: male

Ethnicity: Shan-Chinese

Occupation: high-school student (9th standard)

Place of residence: Quarter 6, Laikha town

Date of incident (killing): June 19, 2004

Details: killed by SPDC while riding a motorbike back to town



Sexual violence

1. Gang rape near village temple

Name: Nang xxxx

Age: 22

Sex: female

Ethnicity: Shan

Marital status: married (with one child)

Occupation: Farmer

Village of origin: xxx village, Nong Kaw tract, Laikha Township

Place of incident (rape):

Date of incident: June 15, 03

Perpetrators: About 10 SPDC troops from LIB 427

Details: Gang-raped while going to her field with her husband.



Gang rape in field hut

Name: Nang xxx

Age: 29 years

Sex: female

Ethnicity: Shan

Marital status: married (with one child)

Occupation: Farmer

Village of origin: xxx village, Bang Sang tract, Laikha Township

Date of incident: October 1, 2003

Place of incident (rape): hill field near village

Perpetrators: SPDC soldiers, battalion unknown

Details: She was raped by 3 soldiers in her hill field-hut.



3. Rape causing insanity

Nang xxxx

Age: 20 years old

Sex: female

Ethnicity: Shan

Marital status: Single

Occupation: Farmer

Village of origin: xxx village, Na Poi tract, Laikha Township

Location of incident (rape): hill-field near village

Date of incident: 2003

Perpetrator: Bo (officer) Maung Maung Hla from IB 382

Details: She was raped by an SPDC soldier while coming back from her hill field. Another villager witnessed the rape.



Random violence, torture

Four villagers' faces slashed with bayonets

Ages: in their 30s and 40s

Sex: male

Ethnicity: Shan

Occupation: farmers

Village of origin: xxx village, Wan Sarng tract, Laikha Township

Date of incident: March 13, 04

Place of incident: xxx village, Wan Sarng tract, Laikha Township

Perpetrators: SPDC troops from LIB 515

Details: They were accused of supporting the Shan resistance and then kicked and their faces slashed with bayonets. The torture ended only after the local tract headman reported the case to an MI officer in town.



Torture of villager by suffocation and beating

Name: Sai xxx

Sex: male

Age: 35

Ethnicity: Shan

Occupation: Farmer

Place of incident (torture): xxx village, ... tract, Laikha township

Date of incident: 2003

Perpetrators: SPDC troops from LIB 332, led by Bo Myo Tint

Details: He was arrested and accused of supporting the Shan resistance. His head was covered with plastic sheeting and tied at the neck. He was also beaten.



Village sprayed with gunfire and temple shelled during religious ceremony

a. 5-yr-old boy shot in leg

Name: Sai xxxx

Age: 5

Sex: male

Ethnicity: Shan

Village of origin: xxx village, Murng Nawng Township

Date of incident: April 20, 2004

Location of incident: xxx village, Murng Nawng Township

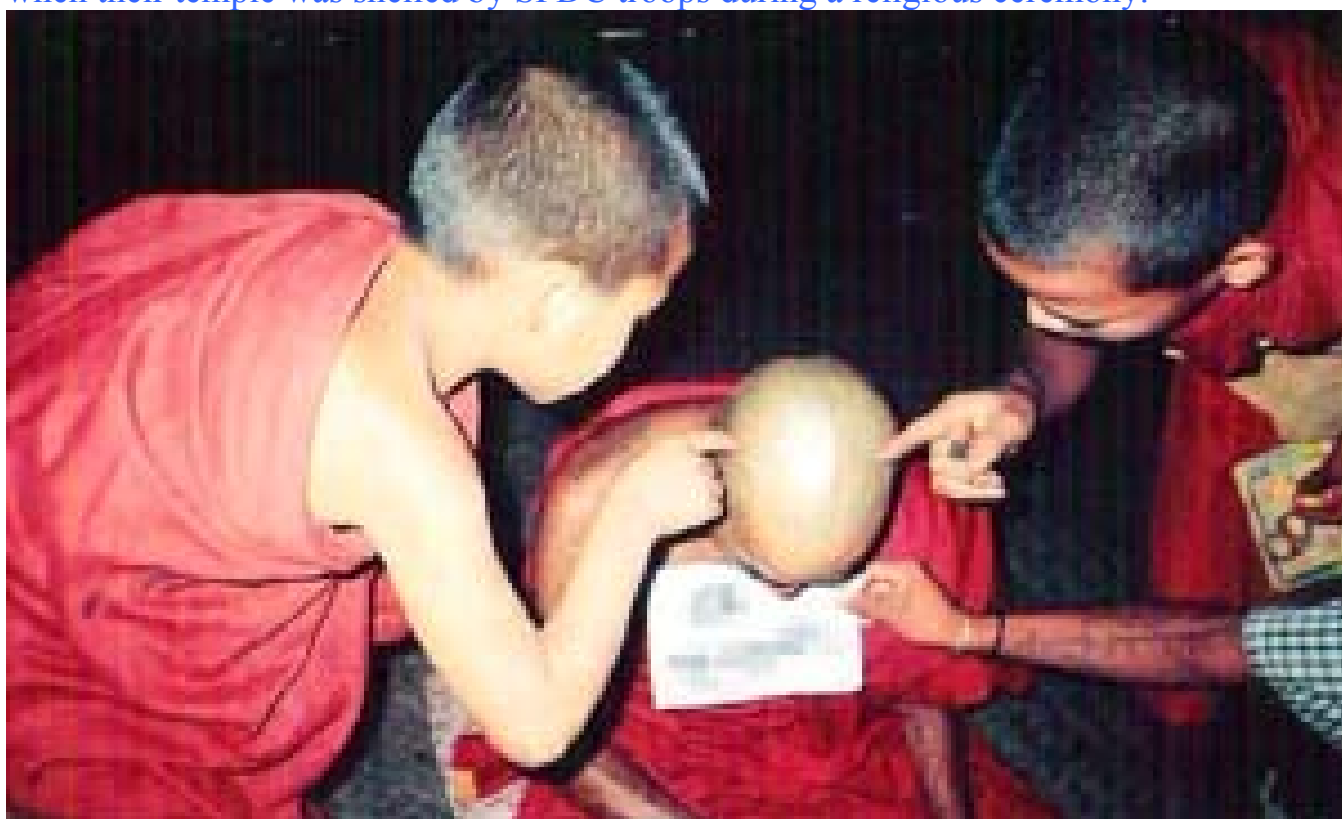
Perpetrators: SPDC troops from IB 286

Details: He was shot in the leg when SPDC troops fired into his village during a temple ceremony.



2 novices and 2 monks injured by shrapnel

2 novices (under 15) and 2 monks were injured by shrapnel in the same incident as above, when their temple was shelled by SPDC troops during a religious ceremony.



Villager beaten nearly to death

Name: Sai xxx

Age: 38 years

Sex: male

Ethnicity: Shan

Occupation: farmer

Village of origin: xxx village, Na Poi tract, Laikha Township

Date of incident (beating): 2003

Location of incident: xxx village, Na Poi tract, Laikha Township

Perpetrators: SPDC troops from LIB 332, led by Bo Myo Tint

Details: He was beaten nearly to death on suspicion of supporting the Shan resistance.



Arrest and imprisonment of headman who had been visited by ICRC

Name: xxx

Age: 54

Sex: Male

Ethnicity: Shan

Marital Status: Married with 3 children

Village of origin: xxx village, Mung Nai Township

Date of arrest: September 03

Perpetrator: Second Lieutenant Kyaw Thi Ha of SPDC LIB 248

Details: He was arrested for alleged support of Shan resistance and is currently imprisoned in Taunggyi.