

# **FMO Country Guide: Burma**

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**Formal name:** Myanmar\* (Burma).

**Capital:** Yangon\* (Rangoon).

**Estimated population:** 42.2 million (July 2002 est., CIA World Factbook).

\* Renamed by the military authorities in 1989, former names in parentheses continue to be used by most democratic and ethnic opposition parties.

### **Map**

CIA World Factbook 2002

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bm.html>

### **Summary**

Historically underdeveloped and divided, Burma today is politically isolated, increasingly militarised, economically mismanaged by its own authorities, and socially and culturally divided along ethnic, religious, and language lines. Following independence from Britain in 1948, parties representing the ethnic minority population have been struggling for greater autonomy from the central Burmese regime. Following nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) staged a coup to take over the governing of Burma, reinstating martial law and imposing restrictions on opposition to the government. Thousands of people were killed during this uprising. Elections held in 1990 whereby the National League for Democracy (NLD), headed by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, won a landslide victory have never been honoured.

The contemporary military regime does not allow access to the country for research purposes, and therefore research on displacement is largely carried out by interviewing people fleeing the country. However, consistent accounts of human rights violations are available over a number of years. Displacement in Burma results mostly from systematic patterns of human rights abuses associated with militarisation and conflict in ethnic minority areas. Human rights violations, carried out with impunity, include numerous acts of arbitrary executions, killings, torture, rape, forced labour, forced relocation, use of child soldiers, and violations of religious freedoms. These have been documented over the years and have increased in intensity since 1988. Muslims and Christians are often persecuted directly because of their minority status.

Recent development efforts to encourage tourism have led to forced labour and further displacement. It has been reported that the islands off the coast of Burma

being developed for tourism have had their populations relocated under conditions of extreme brutality, including killings. There are refugees from Burma in Thailand, Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, and China. It is also thought that the Lao PDR has refugees from Burma, but nothing is known about this population.

Contemporary Burma is a highly mine-affected country and in 2002 was the world's largest producer of illicit opium.

**Websites:**

CIA World Factbook 2002

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bm.html>

BBC Country Profile, December 2002

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country\\_profiles/1300003.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1300003.stm)

Online Burma Library

<http://www.burmalibrary.org>

## **1 Overview**

### **1.1 Historical background**

The present Burmese 'nation-state' is a relatively recent creation. Many ethnic groups do not agree that prior to British annexation they had been brought under the rule of any 'Burman' government, instead claiming they governed their own territories. Burma came under British colonial control in 1886 following three Anglo-Burman wars. For the purposes of ruling, a distinction was drawn between the plains (direct rule) and hills (reliance on existing chiefs and princes), creating Ministerial Burma and the Frontier Areas. This division enabled control and, over time, became encoded in law and remains a legacy of colonialism.

It is believed that the rise of Burmese nationalism began with the founding in 1906 of the Young Men's Buddhist Association in Rangoon. Further nationalist movements and the creation of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), under the leadership of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and U Nu, led to independence in 1948 when Burma left the Commonwealth.

Since becoming independent, representatives of the ethnic minority population – who are considered to make up between one-third and one-half of the population – have been struggling for greater autonomy from the central Burmese government, with approaches ranging from secession to federalism.

In 1947, Aung San had organised a multi-ethnic conference in the Shan town of Panglong with the intention of devising a political structure that both Burmans and ethnic nationalities in the frontier areas could accept in order to reunite the country. Although only four out of fifteen major ethnic groups were represented, the concept of a federal union was agreed upon, and ethnic nationalities were to be granted in ethnic states. Aung San headed the National League for Democracy (NLD) in 1990 when it won a landslide victory in an election that was never honoured (see Section 1.2). Because of later disagreements over boundaries and political representation, as well as the assassination of Aung San and most of his cabinet, the idea of a federal

union was never honoured either.

In Burma, armed groups in opposition to the government are referred to as 'living outside the legal fold' and upon surrender return to the legal fold or 're-enter the light'. General Aung San helped to found the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and during the BSPP era, the CPB was the largest ideologically orientated organisation outside the 'legal fold'.

A military coup in 1962 led Burma to become isolated from the world under the rule of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) in a one-party system dominated by the military. Following nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) staged a coup to take over the governing of Burma, reinstating martial law and imposing restrictions on any opposition to the government. Thousands of people were killed during the 1988 uprising – estimates range from 3,000 to 10,000 deaths. The SLORC renamed itself the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in November 1997.

**Websites:**

FreeBurma: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

<http://www.ibiblio.org/freeburma/assk/assk.html>

Online Burma Library: Aung San Suu Kyi

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=7&lo=d&sl=0>

Myanmar pro-government website

<http://www.myanmars.net/>

National Coalition Government of the Union Burma

<http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/yearbooks/Main.htm>

The Britain–Burma Society

<http://www.shwepla.net/Myanmar/index.htm>

*The Journal of Burma Studies*, Northern Illinois University, Centre for Burma Studies

<http://www.niu.edu/cseas/seap/jbs.html>

School of Oriental and African Studies, Burmese language and literature course

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/SouthEastAsia/Burmese.html>

Open Society Institute: Country in Crisis report

<http://www.soros.org/burma/CRISIS/index.html>

Online Burma Library: History

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=10&lo=d&sl=0>

Online Burma Library: Law

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=404&lo=d&sl=0>

## 1.2 Politics

Over the past fifty years, two contrasting approaches have been highlighted as dominating Burma's political struggles: Aung San's 'Unity in Diversity' and Ne Win's 'Burmese Way to Socialism'. In a 'Blueprint for a Free Burma' Aung San combined nationalist, communist, and parliamentary ideas. He called for equal economic development and independence for ethnic groups to bring the country together. In contrast to this, Ne Win believed that the military was the only institution capable of cementing an ethnically diverse country together. He combined Buddhism, Marxism, and nationalist principles to form his 'Burmese Way to Socialism'. There is also a third approach that encapsulates the desires of the ethnic population and manifests itself in a variety of forms from secession to federalism.

Burma's current military junta came to power in 1988, forming the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). The ruling council is made up of military personnel and the junta is backed by a large armed force, estimated to number 429,000, backed up by a military intelligence network.

General elections in Burma in May 1990 to form *Pyithutt Hluttaw*, or the People's Assembly, saw the opposition party, the NLD (led by Aung San Suu Kyi) winning a landslide victory. The military junta issued Order 1/90 to justify their refusal to recognise the election result and therefore the election result has not been honoured. Aung San was placed under house arrest. A 1992 plan to convene a National Convention, or Constituent Assembly, to lay down guidelines and basic principles for a new constitution has suffered been postponed several times and remains incomplete.

Aung San was released from house arrest in July 1995. In November 1997, the SLORC was reshuffled and renamed itself the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). In May 1998 the NLD demanded that parliament be convened; following this, hundreds of NLD member were detained in 'government guesthouses'. Only nine of the ninety-three parties that contested the May 1990 election are still legally recognised. The NLD remains a legal party but operates under severe restrictions plus continuous harassment and surveillance.

In 1993 the junta established the Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA) which, in 1997, was explicitly recognised as the junta's political wing. The head of the junta, General Than Shwe, is also head of the USDA, which now has a 12 million 'member' support base. It is important to note that non-members are denied access to universities and civil service jobs, and as such membership does not reflect popular support for the regime. Members of the USDA are believed to be responsible for the attack of Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade in November 1996.

Since 1989, cease-fire agreements have been made with a number of ethnic minority resistance armies. Armies not participating in the cease-fire include the Karen National Union (KNU) as talks broke down in 1995/6, the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) as the cease-fire broke down in 1995, and the Shan State Army-South (SSA-South). Cease-fire agreements with ethnic minority resistance armies have not ended human rights violations and have, in some instances, increased the incidents of forced labour, forced portering, and forced relocation due to the expanded presence of soldiers in areas previously under control of ethnic minority groups. These agreements generally do not lead to the resolution of political

grievances, as political solutions are not sought through dialogue.

A reshuffle of top generals in November 2001 was followed by arrests of four relatives of Ne Win amidst allegations of plotting a coup. In September 2002 these four were sentenced to death for treason.

A tripartite dialogue between the ethnic opposition groups, the NLD and the SPDC, has been long desired, but is regarded by many as an ambitious ideal. There are currently discussions taking place between the NLD and the SPDC.

**Websites:**

Burmese government

<http://www.myanmar.com/>

Open Society Institute: The Burma Project

<http://www.soros.org/burma/>

BurmaNet News

<http://www.burmanet.org>

<http://three.pairlist.net/pipermail/burmanet/>

Free Burma

<http://www.freeburma.org/>

Online Burma Library: Dialogue/Transition

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=22&lo=d&sl=0>

Online Burma Library: Politics and Government

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=421&lo=d&sl=0>

Online Burma Library: Military

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=411&lo=d&sl=0>

### **1.3 Culture**

Bordered by Bangladesh, India, Tibet, China, Laos, and Thailand, contemporary Burma has an extremely ethnically diverse population living within a country that has been politically and economically isolated for decades. No detailed census of the ethnic minority population has been attempted since 1931, and therefore no accurate survey of the ethnic population exists. However, it is estimated that ethnic minority groups make up at least one-third of the total population and inhabit half the land area. A 1974 Constitution demarcated seven ethnic minority states – Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kayah (Karenni), Mon, Rakhine (Arakan), and Shan, as well as seven divisions (Burman). This demarcation does not reflect the ethnically complex makeup of the population, nor does it cater for the population of Indian and Chinese extraction.

Buddhism is the main and official religion. There are also Animist, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and other religions practised throughout Burma. Throughout Burma's history Buddhist monks, who are the main alternative voice of authority, have frequently intervened in the country's political crisis and many are therefore kept under surveillance by the military regime. At the same time the ruling generals demonstrate

their own piety through lavish donations to individual monks and monasteries.

'Nat-Pwe' describes the still active cult in the Burma of the thirty-seven 'nats'. It is difficult to define a 'nat' but they are said to be somewhere between a spirit and a god and are powerful beings that need to be placated. They are easily upset and can bestow a good future or bad luck on their followers.

The official language of the state is Burmese which is widely spoken. Over 100 different dialects and languages have been identified in Burma. Under current government control, ethnic minority groups are invariably barred from teaching their own languages in schools and it is widely considered by members of the ethnic populations that a 'Burmanization' process is under way. Efforts to document the 'national races of the Union of Myanmar' have been carried out by the military government, largely to promote tourism.

In 1989 the military junta changed the name of the country from Burma to 'Myanmar Naing Ngan' and changed the names of various place names to Burmanized versions rather than English ones; for example, Rangoon became Yangon. The non-Burman groups see this as an attempt to 'Burmanize' their culture and therefore do not recognise or use the new place names.

#### **Websites:**

Northern Illinois University, Centre for Burma Studies

[http://www.seasite.niu.edu/burmese/Cooler/Intro/BurmaArt\\_Intro.htm](http://www.seasite.niu.edu/burmese/Cooler/Intro/BurmaArt_Intro.htm)

Open Society Institute: Country in Crisis report

<http://www.soros.org/burma/CRISIS/ethnic.html>

Online Burma Library: Languages of Burma

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=397&lo=d&sl=0>

Online Burma Library: Society and Culture

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=469&lo=d&sl=0>

#### **1.4 Economics**

Once referred to as the 'rice bowl of Asia', in 1987 Burma was designated by the UN to be a 'Least Developed Country'. It is rich in natural resources, with reserves of minerals, ores, and gemstones as yet unexplored. The economy is predominantly agricultural with an undeveloped industrial sector. Industrial output is hampered by inadequate power, infrastructure, and investment. A small manufacturing sector is dominated by food processing. The energy and mining sector is growing with the recent commencement of exports from the Yadana and Yetagun offshore natural gas fields.

Military-run enterprises dominate the mining, power, transport, domestic trade, and manufacturing industries. Government-run enterprises suffer from lack of transparency, corruption, and mismanagement.

Burmese currency is called the *kyat* and is officially set at six *kyat* to one US Dollar. However, black market rates have seen the rate fluctuate between 800 and 1,000 *kyat*

to the dollar. This overvalued official exchange rate means that measurements of the economy are severely distorted. The informal sector and the extra-legal economies of illegal logging, widespread smuggling, and opium exports are also not included in official measurements.

The effects of US economic sanctions and the European withdrawal of Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) Privileges have been partly offset by Burma's admission into the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in July 1997.

Growth and incomes are uneven, with those living in the urban areas benefiting from higher levels of investment and relatively higher incomes. It is estimated that military spending accounts for at least 40% of public sector spending.

**Websites:**

The Economist Intelligence Unit: Country Profile

<http://www.eiu.com/>

World Bank: Myanmar Data Profile

<http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/dgprofile.asp?RMDK=82804&SMDK=1&W=0>

Online Burma Library: Economy

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=45&lo=d&sl=0>

**1.5 Geography and society**

Located in South-East Asia, Burma is bordered by Bangladesh, India, Tibet, China, Laos, and Thailand. Naturally rich, its diverse ecosystem ranges from tropical reefs along the Bay of Bengal to mountains of the Himalayas. It has some of the last remaining rainforests in Asia, which are home to numerous endangered flora and fauna. The climate is tropical monsoon and the terrain is central lowlands surrounded by steep highlands.

In recent years Burma's rainforest, in particular the teak forest, has been opened to Thai loggers in order to earn foreign exchange. Environmental concerns over this logging and the consequential disappearance of dense forests are raised mostly outside Burma, with internal voices being suppressed. Fishing concessions have also been granted to Thai companies, which have led to over-fishing by modern trawler fleets in wide areas of the Andaman Sea on Burma's south-east coast.

Burma has oil reserves that have recently been exploited with the start of exports from the Yadana and Yetagun oilfields.

With very little investment in health care by the military regime, international organisations have, in recent years, been attempting to improve the health facilities available. As of 2002, the infant mortality rate was 72.11 deaths per 1,000 live births with the average number of children born per woman at 2.23. These figures do not illustrate the urban-rural dimensions of childbirth. Also as of 2002, average life expectancy was 55.41 years (female 57.07 years, male 53.85 years) with only 4.8 per cent of the population 65 years and over.

HIV/AIDS is referred to as the 'silent emergency' in Burma. CIA figures put the adult prevalence rate at nearly 2 per cent, and the total number of people living with HIV/AIDS at 530,000 (1999 estimate).

In 1988, the military government closed all the schools, colleges, and universities in Burma following student-led demonstrations for democracy and the threat of further pro-democracy activities. Although the universities are periodically reopened for examinations to take place, they remain subject to arbitrary closure, and have been closed more often than open ever since. Those that are open are subject to repressive military control and are under-equipped. The reality within Burma is that a whole generation of young people has been deprived of the opportunity of education.

#### **Websites:**

Prospect Burma (funds scholarships for Burmese students)

<http://www.prospectburma.org>

CIA World Factbook 2002

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bm.html>

Online Burma Library: Education

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=162&lo=d&sl=0>

Online Burma Library: Geography

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=556&lo=d&sl=0>

Online Burma Library: Health

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=247&lo=d&sl=0>

## **2 Causes and Consequences**

Access for research within Burma is denied by the authorities and it is therefore the evidence of people fleeing Burma that is drawn upon to create knowledge of the scale, locations, and timescales of displacement throughout the country. Journalists are also denied permission to visit Burma unless closely monitored by the authorities. However, consistent accounts of human rights violations during military offensives, while gaining control of territories, or during 'development' programmes are available over a number of years. Displacement in Burma results mostly from systematic patterns of human rights abuses associated with the conflict in ethnic minority areas. Broadly categorised, human rights abuses fall into two main areas: (a) gaining control of the population through militarisation, i.e. conflict-induced displacement, and (b) development programmes carried out under conditions that violate human rights, i.e. development-induced displacement. However, there is often great overlap between these two categories, and increased militarisation is not always connected to conflict. It is militarisation and its effects on the civilian population that causes much of the displacement.

### **2.1 Conflict-induced displacement**

#### **2.1.1 Human rights violations by the Burmese government**

In 1956, Burma acceded to the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of

the Crime of Genocide. Burma acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 15 July 1991, ratified the four 1949 Geneva Conventions in 1992, and acceded to the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (with reservations) on 22 July 1997. The UN Commission on Human Rights adopted a resolution, by consensus, in March 1992, appointing an official 'Special Rapporteur' to investigate the human rights situation in Burma. This replaced the previous 'Independent Expert' who had reported under the UN's confidential '1503' procedure.

As the central military regime struggles to dominate the social order of Burma, gross human rights violations occur, particularly in the ethnic minority areas, but also in the 'Burman' areas when voices of dissent are heard. The regime is not held accountable for the numerous acts of arbitrary executions, killings, torture, rape, forced labour, forced relocation, use of child soldiers, and violations of religious freedoms that have been documented over the years.

Human rights violations, including forced relocations of rural and urban populations have, according to Human Rights Watch (Asia), 'increased in intensity' since the SLORC/SPDC seized power from the BSPP in 1988. Amnesty International has continuously documented extra-judicial killings, torture, and other forms of ill-treatment.

**Websites:**

The UN Human Rights System 2002

<http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2002/vol3/myanmar.htm>

Online Burma Library: The United Nations System

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=668&lo=d&sl=0>

Amnesty International

<http://www.amnesty.org>

Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org>

Human Rights Watch: World Report 2003 - Burma

<http://www.burmaproject.org/HRW%20World%20Report%202003%20-%20Burma.doc>

Karen Human Rights Group

<http://www.khrg.org>

National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, Human Rights Documentation Unit, Human Rights Yearbook 2000: Burma (Myanmar)

<http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/yearbooks/Main.htm>

Online Burma Library: Human Rights

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=281&lo=d&sl=0>

### **2.1.2 Burmese military offensives to gain control of areas**

Groups not participating in the cease-fire are particularly vulnerable to military offensives. One example is the Karen National Union (KNU) who in February 1995 saw the loss of their headquarters at Manerplaw due to a military offensive. Again, in the early months of 1997, a full-scale military offensive by the Burmese army took place. This focussed on the sixth and fourth brigade areas of the KNU. Headed up by Major General Thiha Thura Sit Maung, an officer who is known within the Burma for 'tough' tactics, 70,000-80,000 troops were mobilised for this operation. Numerous accounts of arbitrary executions, rape, torture, beatings, and looting as a direct result of this military offensive were reported against Karen and non-Karen villagers co-existing in Karen areas. Muslims saw their mosques destroyed with the materials and valuables looted and given to Buddhists. There were also reports of Muslims being forced to eat pork as a form of torture. As a result of this offensive, for the first time in modern history the Burmese military have a presence at virtually all points of the 2,500-kilometre border between it and Thailand. The political 'buffer' zone that the Karen provided over a number of years to Thailand disappeared and as a result the Karen became an economic hindrance to Thailand.

### **2.1.3 Forced relocation and the 'Four Cuts'**

The process of controlling populations invariably involves a counter-insurgency strategy known as the 'Four Cuts' – food, finance, intelligence and recruitment. Successive Burmese military regimes have used this strategy since the mid 1960s. The aim of this strategy is to sever links between the civilian population and the forces in opposition to the central government. Forcible relocation of people acts as an effective method of breaking these links and enables the SPDC to fragment communities in order to consolidate its control. People are relocated to particular relocation sites or have scattered themselves after being served relocation orders that give only a few days' notice. In recent years, large numbers of Kachin, Shan, Karenni, Mon, and Karen people have been forcibly relocated due to the 'Four Cuts'.

The policy is aimed at turning 'black' rebel-held areas into 'brown' (contested or free-fire) zones, and thereafter into 'white' zones that are securely controlled by government forces.

The enforcement of these relocation campaigns was and is invariably brutal. For example, the 1996 and 1997 relocations of the Shan population were unprecedented in scope as well as degree of brutality practised. Since March 1996 there has been a systematic relocation programme in the central Shan state in an area of over 5,000 square miles, affecting 100,000 people from 600 villages who have been relocated into 45 main relocation sites. A continuation and extension of this relocation programme occurred in 1997 with many villagers being relocated once again. In March 1997 alone, approximately 12,500 people moved once again, and in April the same year, troops burned down 1,000 houses in a relocation site. It has been estimated that over 200,000 people in Shan state have been relocated since March 1996. The increase in brutality has involved large numbers of extra-judicial killings; one known example occurred at the beginning of July 1997 when ninety-six people were reportedly killed en masse.

Conditions in relocation sites are invariably severe. In a relocation site known as Shadaw in Karenni state in 1996, no food, medicine, materials for buildings, or shelter

were provided; some 200 people reportedly died of disease; people were forced to labour; and beatings were witnessed. In 1997 people could buy passes to leave these relocation sites from sunrise to sunset to forage for food. However, the threat of being caught outside the sites, being arrested, beaten, tortured, or shot on sight continued. In one week in October 1996, 1,248 Karenni people arrived in refugee camps in Thailand, mostly from relocation sites in the townships of Loikaw and Shadaw. The relocation sites in Shadaw and Ywathit are close to army camps, meaning that forced labour for the military is often required.

In north-west Burma the 'Four Cuts' policy is also used to destroy links between the civilian population and the Chin and Naga ethnic resistance forces.

As the central Burmese authorities seek to control the population, particularly the ethnic minority population, relocation takes on a number of dynamics. The degree of coercion as well as the scale and variety of causes involved in relocations all need to be considered. Fragmentation of communities, the splitting of families, the individual losses associated with relocation, and the levels of mistrust generated by people relocated cannot be underestimated.

**Website:**

Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Dispossessed: Forced Relocation and Extrajudicial Killings in Shan State* (April 1998)

<http://www.shanland.org/HR/Publication/Dis/dispossessed.htm>

**2.1.4 Forced portering**

The forced recruitment of civilians as porters for military offensives is another cause of displacement. As an example, during the 1997 military offensive against the KNU, a massive conscription of porters, including the use of prisoners, occurred. Reports of forcible conscription from a large number of villages and the outskirts of Rangoon have been documented. People were taken from their homes, cars, cinemas, and shops.

The sense of terror that is invoked by having family members taken as porters is important to understand. Family members taken as porters often do not return and just 'disappear'. If porters manage to escape they may find themselves far from their homes with, potentially, no option to return due to fear of repercussions.

Forced portering is ongoing in many forms at present, not only in the context of military offensives. Displacement also occurs because of other forms of forced portering for the army on a more ad hoc basis, not always in conflict areas.

**2.1.5 Human rights violations by Burmese government agents (DKBA)**

The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) was formed after a split within the KNU army in December 1994. The Burmese military used this breakaway faction to obtain information about KNU-held territory close to the border with Thailand. Together, the Burmese army and the DKBA conducted offensives to gain control of areas and carried out attacks on refugee camps in Thailand. The DKBA is a relatively small force, supported at its formation by the (then) SLORC with funds, weapons, uniforms, and other supplies.

### **2.1.6 Human rights violations by non-state agents (ethnic opposition groups)**

While there is less information available about human rights abuses in the ethnic opposition areas, there is anecdotal evidence that some of these groups replicate the regime's tactics and commit human rights violations. This also occurs with impunity, although it is considered that over the past decade some of these groups have taken on the human rights agenda and have begun to address these issues.

#### **Website:**

Amnesty International  
<http://www.amnesty.org>

### **2.1.7 Internally Displaced People (IDPs)**

The counter-insurgency tactic of the 'Four Cuts' described above is one reason why internal displacement occurs in Burma. People are often forced into relocation sites which have been categorised into three main types: (a) large 'relocation centres' controlled by the Burmese army often situated in the vicinity of infrastructure projects requiring forced labour; (b) smaller 'relocation villages' which are pre-existing villages that are fenced in and tightly controlled by the Burmese army; and (c) non-state-controlled 'relocation sites' which are under the command of an armed 'cease-fire' group.

Internal displacement within Burma can also be a particular phenomenon whereby people rarely flee in large numbers. They usually move in small groups of a few families or individuals, in absolute silence, to ensure they are not identified as displaced and persecuted and/or executed en route.

Many refugees were initially IDPs who have subsequently been forced to flee to neighbouring countries. Some people, upon reaching an international border, have been denied access to asylum and have been therefore forced to remain internally displaced; others have been deterred from seeking asylum due to knowledge of the harsh conditions and 'humane deterrence' in refugee camps and have thus chosen to flee internally to forest areas to avoid persecution.

There is no acknowledgement from the military regime regarding IDPs. Consequently, there are a plethora of difficulties in obtaining statistics regarding IDPs from Burma.

The overlap between the concepts of conflict-induced displacement and development-induced displacement is great when IDPs are viewed. People may have fled their homes as a result of the construction of dams, roads, or other infrastructure projects for which they will receive no compensation. Part of their decision to flee may often be a perceived threat of persecution combined with the knowledge that there will be excessive demands for forced labour placed upon them.

#### **Websites:**

UN Commission on Human Rights (Representative of the Secretary General, Francis M. Deng), *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, UN Document E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2 (11-2-1998)  
[http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/pub/idp\\_gp/idp.html](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/pub/idp_gp/idp.html)

Norwegian Refugee Council: Global IDP Project

<http://www.db.idpproject.org>

Burma Border Consortium: Internally Displaced People and Relocation Sites in Eastern Burma, September 2002

[http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/BBC\\_Relocation\\_Site\\_Report\\_\(11-9-02\).htm](http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/BBC_Relocation_Site_Report_(11-9-02).htm)

Karen Human Rights Group, *Flight, Hunger and Survival: Repression and Displacement in the Villages of Papun and Nyaunglabin Districts* (October 2001)

<http://www.ibiblio.org/freeburma/humanrights/khrg/archive/khrg2001/khrg0103a.html>

Karen Human Rights Group, *A Strategy of Subjugation: The Situation in Ler Mu Lah Township, Tenasserim Division* (December 2001)

<http://www.ibiblio.org/freeburma/humanrights/khrg/archive/khrg2001/khrg0104.html>

Burma Ethnic Research Group, *Forgotten Victims of a Hidden War: Internally Displaced Karen in Burma* (1998)

[http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wBannerSourcesAlpha/83586C2B846482F9C12567B000331BA4/\\$file/Berg+Karen+IDP+report.pdf](http://www.db.idpproject.org/Sites/idpSurvey.nsf/wBannerSourcesAlpha/83586C2B846482F9C12567B000331BA4/$file/Berg+Karen+IDP+report.pdf)

Burma Ethnic Research Group, *Conflict and Displacement in Karenni: The Need for Considered Responses* (2000)

<http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/responses.htm>

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): Internal Displacement Unit

<http://www.reliefweb.int/idp/partners/global.htm>

US Committee for Refugees (USCR)

<http://www.refugees.org/world/countryindex/burma.htm>

OCHA: Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

[http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/pub/idp\\_gp/idp.html](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/pub/idp_gp/idp.html)

Amnesty International, *Lack of Security in Counter-Insurgency Areas* (July 2002)

<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/ASA160072002?OpenDocument&of=COUNTRIES\MYANMAR>

Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Dispossessed: Forced Relocation and Extrajudicial Killings in Shan State* (April 1998)

<http://www.shanland.org/shrf/dispossessed/dispossessed.htm>

Lahu National Development Organisation, *Unsettling Moves: Tha Wa Forced Resettlement Programme in Eastern Shan State* (April 2002)

<http://www.shanland.org/shrf/Wa/contents.htm>

Online Burma Library: Internal Displacement/Forced Migration

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=390&lo=d&sl=0>

### **2.1.8 Persecution of Muslims and Christians**

Virtually every city or town in Burma has a Muslim population. The largest concentration occurs in Arakan state. The Muslim community is very aware of its minority status and has tried over the years to maintain a low profile in Burma. Muslims mostly consist of the descendants of farmers, clerks, and traders who arrived during the colonial period. Throughout military rule, successive regimes have used the Muslim community as an example to whip up nationalist sentiments. Antagonism towards the Muslim population has sometimes been considered an indicator of anti-regime tensions that cannot be channelled towards the government in power.

Some 200,000 Muslim Rohingyas were driven into Bangladesh in 1978 due to a military offensive. In 1991 a forced relocation programme saw 250,000 Muslim Rohingyas cross the border once again.

Most Muslims within Burma are not considered to be citizens under Burma's strict citizenship law. They are unable to obtain national identify cards and as a result find it difficult to travel, get an education, or conduct business. The majority (particularly outside Arakan state) do not own land but work as traders or day labourers. There is a complete ban on the building of any new mosque and on repairs to the exterior of any existing mosque.

Ethnic minority Christians, who potentially comprise 10 per cent of the population, have been subjected to increased harassment and restrictions since 1988. In the urban areas, delays in obtaining approval for building new religious structures are common, and passports to attend Christian conferences abroad are difficult to obtain. In ethnic minority areas, churches are burnt down during military offensives, and human rights violations are committed against pastors.

In the north-west of Burma there have been reports that the government has been forcibly converting Naga Christians to Buddhism. In Chin state the authorities have attempted to lure Christians into becoming Buddhists by offering them exemption from forced labour. The recent enhanced presence of the Burma army in Chin state and Sagaing division have resulted in increased religious persecution. A large percentage of north-western Burma's population is Christian, and the army is actively restricting and punishing those persons wishing to practice Christianity while rewarding those who convert to Buddhism.

#### **Websites:**

Human Rights Documentation Unit (NCGUB): Freedom of Belief and Religion  
<http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/yearbooks/The%20Freedom%20of%20Belief%20and%20Religion.htm>

Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG): The Persecution of Muslims in Burma  
<http://www.ibiblio.org/freeburma/humanrights/khrg/archive/khrg2002/khrg0202.html>

### **2.1.9 Political prisoners**

It is not known exactly how many political prisoners there are inside Burmese jails throughout the country. Amnesty International has been documenting the plight of political prisoners since 1988 and it is believed that the current numbers are between 1,300 and 2,000 people. The current military regime does not release information

regarding these prisoners, and often it is not known where, under what circumstances, or under what conditions political prisoners are being detained. News of their condition and situation usually filters out through family and friends or via the clandestine underground movement. Sometimes it is unclear as to what they are charged with and whether they have been released or sentenced again on a different charge. People are mostly charged under Section 5(j) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act and Section 17/1 of the 1908 Unlawful Associations Act. Some overtly political prisoners are held under criminal charges. Political prisoners are mostly male, although female activists, journalists, and writers are also imprisoned, sometimes alongside their children.

People in ethnic minority areas are also imprisoned under Section 17/1 of the Unlawful Associations Act if they are suspected of associating with armed opposition groups. Very little information about their sentences or the conditions of their detention is known outside Burma.

Throughout Burma there are prisons, military intelligence detention centres, police detention centres, military camps, and labour camps where prisoners, often in chains, are required to do hard labour.

Members of various political parties, ethnic groups, students, pro-democracy activists, writers, and journalists are routinely imprisoned. People are arrested for such acts as speaking to foreign journalists or UN representatives, possession of censored publications, making jokes, or writing articles and poetry about the military regime. Sentences for minor cases are often seven years, but many political prisoners are sentenced to life imprisonment. The death penalty has recently reappeared as a punishment for such acts, although international awareness has consistently weakened the ability of the military regime to take such actions in known cases.

Many political prisoners are regularly interrogated and tortured whilst in custody. Methods of torture include beatings, death threats, rape, electrocution, sleep deprivation, forcing people to stand or squat in uncomfortable positions for long periods, rolling iron or bamboo rods along a person's shins, pouring water over a person's head covered in plastic, forcing people to kneel on sharp stones, and hanging them by the arms and feet. Other political prisoners have been taken to the rural areas for forced labour projects and others have reportedly been killed extra-judicially. Prisoners are often kept in cells for several months and are sometimes kept in iron shackles, which consist of an iron bar between the feet attached to chains that go around the waist. These shackles are attached with a hammer and nail.

Information regarding prisoners usually arrives in a fragmented manner. Burmese people carrying any type of human rights information to the international community risk arrest and imprisonment. The Burmese community in exile commemorate the plight of political prisoners through publicity, documentation, and commemoration of anniversaries of arrest dates, and in this way a collective memory is supported.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) withdrew from Burma in June 1995 due to lack of standard access to prisoners, but has opened an office in Rangoon once again in 1999.

In February 2003, for the first ever, Amnesty International has been able to officially visit Burma. They met with the SPDC and called upon them to release immediately and unconditionally all prisoners of conscience still held throughout the country, including one female prisoner held in Insein Correctional Facility in Rangoon with her 18-month-old child.

**Websites:**

Amnesty International  
<http://www.amnesty.org/>

Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma)  
<http://www.aappb.org>

ICRC  
<http://www.icrc.org>

**2.1.10 Landmines**

Burma is a highly mine-affected country and most parties in the internal conflict have laid or continue to lay landmines. The SPDC has increased production of anti-personnel landmines and produces at least three types: MM1, MM2, and Claymore-type mines. Although the SPDC is not known to export landmines, mines from China, Israel, Italy, Russia, and the United States have been found planted inside Burma, indicating their past or present importation. Within Asia, Burma is currently second only to Afghanistan in the number of new landmine victims, surpassing even Cambodia.

Armed opposition groups who do not have the financial resources or capacity to purchase landmines use 'home-made' landmines. Extra-judicial killings have occurred due to the possession of batteries, which are considered a component of these 'home-made' landmines.

The SPDC has not acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty and abstained from voting on the pro-mine ban treaty UN General Assembly Resolution 56/24M in 2001. There is no de-mining activity within Burma, and survivors of landmines receive no compensation and are in fact often required to pay for their own treatment and the cost of the mine to local officials.

There are consistent reports of Burma army units forcing non-Burmese ethnic minority populations or people serving as porters to walk in front of the soldiers to detonate mines, thus acting as 'human minesweepers'.

As part of a new plan to 'fence the country', the Coastal Region Command Headquarters gave orders to its troops from the Tenasserim division to lay mines along the Thai–Burma border. In the case of the Burma–Bangladesh border, the SPDC is actively maintaining minefields. Illegal loggers and drug traffickers have also allegedly used mines to control areas.

**Websites:**

Landmine Monitor, Burma  
<http://www.icbl.org/cgi->

[bin/go.cgi?0=http://www.nonviolenceinternational.net/seasia/Mb/Index.htm](http://www.nonviolenceinternational.net/seasia/Mb/Index.htm)

International Campaign to Ban Landmines, Burma

<http://www.icbl.org/country/burma/>

### **2.1.11 Illicit drugs**

The CIA World Factbook for 2002 states that Burma is the world's largest producer of illicit opium, surpassing even Afghanistan. The surrender of drug warlord Khun Sa along with his Mong Tai Army in January 1996 was hailed by Rangoon as a major counter-narcotics success, but production has not abated much since.

The text *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948*, by Bertil Lintner, is the most authoritative book on the interrelationship of drugs, insurgency, counter-insurgency and politics in Burma. Exploration of the drug problem in the Golden Triangle of South-East Asia needs to take into account Burma's history of military rule, ethnic tensions, and civil war. Lintner points out that upon independence in 1948, the annual production of opium in Burma totalled thirty tons. During the 1992-3 harvesting season, the yield, according to American estimates, was at least 2,575 tons of raw opium – an 8,000 per cent increase from 1948.

Burma is also a major source of methamphetamine and heroin destined for regional consumption. Internal consumption and dependence is also creating what is termed by health professionals as a 'silent emergency' of HIV/AIDS within Burma. In the north-west of Burma cheap, high-grade Burmese heroin has been attributed to the Burmese military presence and the complicity of higher authorities in heroin production and trade. The cheap heroin has led to a steep rise in the number of injecting drug users throughout the region.

#### **Websites:**

CIA World Factbook 2002

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bm.html>

Online Burma Library: Drugs

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=26&lo=d&sl=0>

### **2.1.12 Amnesty or truth: holding the tiger by the tail**

Currently the idea of a 'truth commission' for Burma is far from reality. The threat of a truth commission in Burma is thought to be one of the reasons why progress on talks between the NLD and the current military regime is slow. The ruling generals are seeking to avoid being prosecuted for their crimes. There is considerable documentation of human rights abuses, should a database be necessary at some point in the future. The widely used expression 'holding a tiger by the tail' is understood by a number of Burmese commentators to convey this dilemma, in that should the ruling generals let go of the tail, the tiger (signifying the general population of Burma) would turn around and eat them (the generals).

### **2.2 Disaster-induced displacement**

Little is known about disaster-induced displacement within Burma due to the general political isolation of the country and the lack of access for researchers. While floods are reported on occasion by refugees who reach neighbouring countries, no systematic

reports have been compiled documenting their nexus to displacement. Deforestation due to excessive logging in recent years, and its resulting effects, are considered to contribute to the floods within Burma; but here the overlap between disaster and development is obvious.

**Websites:**

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Myanmar  
<http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/cn6.asp?iYear=0&xFlag=2&countryid=121&view=1>

Earthquake information  
<http://www.geo.ed.ac.uk/quake/quakes>  
<http://www.geog.le.ac.uk/cti/index.html>

Disaster Relief  
<http://www.disasterrelief.org/>

Reliefweb  
<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf>

Tropical weather sites  
<http://www.tropicalweather.com/current.htm>  
<http://cimss.ssec.wisc.edu/tropic/tropic.html>

Benfield Greig Hazard Research Centre  
<http://www.bghrc.com/>

**2.3 Development-induced displacement**

‘Development’ in Burma is strictly a ‘top-down’ activity with a focus on construction of infrastructure and modernisation. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in November 1997. However, adding ‘Development’ to their title has not impacted in any way on their methods of ‘development’, which remain inefficient, prescriptive, and urban-biased.

Whilst some international NGOs in Burma do practice PAR techniques for assessing needs ‘empowerment’, this, in the Frierian sense, is not a reality.

Throughout Chin state and the Sagaing division, the military regime has in recent years imposed a program of infrastructure projects throughout the north-west, in order to facilitate their version of ‘development’. As with other areas, the construction of roads and other infrastructure projects have been carried out under military supervision. The work is done almost exclusively by villagers, who are forced to work at gun-point without pay and who are often abused by the soldiers. Burmese soldiers regularly extort large sums of money and land from local people without any form of compensation. There are reports of local people moving away from areas that are being ‘developed’ due to fear of excessive requirements for forced labour, extortion, etc.

**Websites:**

Earthrights International  
<http://www.earthrights.org>

Rainforest Relief  
<http://www.enviroweb.org>

### **2.3.1 Forced labour in Burma**

In 1955, Burma ratified the ILO Convention No.29 Concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (1930), but it is not a party of the ILO Convention No.105 Concerning the Abolition of Forced Labour (1957).

Technical co-operation with Burma was suspended by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in mid 1999 due to continued use of forced labour following a Commission of Inquiry that found a continued failure to implement the ILO Convention No. 29 Concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour that was ratified by Burma in 1955. A Commission of Inquiry by the ILO was conducted due to thirty years of criticism by the ILO's supervisory bodies of Myanmar's gross violations of the Convention (No. 29) and its 'continued failure to implement' the Convention. This Commission found

'abundant evidence ... showing the pervasive use of forced labour imposed on the civilian population throughout Myanmar by the authorities and the military for portering, the construction, maintenance and servicing of military camps, other work in support of the military, work on agriculture, logging and other production projects undertaken the by the authorities or the military, sometimes for the profit of private individuals, the construction and maintenance of roads, railways and bridges, other infrastructure work and a range of other tasks...' (1998, para. 528).

The Commission also found that failure to comply was punishable by fine or imprisonment and that in practice, exactions of forced labour gave rise to extortion of money; threats to life and security; extra-judicial punishment of those who were unwilling, slow, or unable to comply; physical abuse, beatings, torture, rape, and murder (1998, para. 530). They found the forced labour was widely performed by women, children, elderly persons, and others otherwise unfit for such work and that the burden of forced labour appeared to be particularly great for ethnic minority groups, particularly in areas of strong military presence.

In 2000 the ILO applied Article 33 of its constitution – for the first time in history – which involved pressing its members to review their relations with Burma and cease any activity which could aid or abet the use of forced labour.

Following on from this report, the US Department of Labor also conducted a report on labour practices in Burma, which arrived at roughly the same conclusions.

Under pressure from the ILO, the SPDC officially banned forced labour in November 2000 and decreed that anyone using forced labour would be criminally charged.

Analysts do not consider that this has had any impact on forced labour practices, particularly given that nobody has been charged since the ban. In October 2002 the ILO placed a Liaison Officer in the country to attempt to eradicate forced labour. However, forced labour continues to create widespread displacement.

The military regime regard the practice of '*loh ah pay*' (Pali term for labour contributed to the community to earn religious merit, by now used by the SPDC and Burma army to call villagers for forced labour) as being 'voluntary' labour, and claim that since the times of the Myanmar kings, many dams, irrigation works, lakes, etc. have been built with labour contributed by all the people of the area. They also claim that contribution of labour is a noble deed and that the religious merit attained from carrying it out contributes to a better personal well-being and spiritual strength. Needless to say, the 246 people interviewed for the ILO's Commission of Inquiry did not regard the excessive demands of forced labour and resulting implications as contributing to their personal well-being.

**Websites:**

International Labour Organisation, Commission of Inquiry, *Forced Labour in Myanmar (Burma)* (1998)

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/gb/docs/gb273/myanmar.htm>

Recent ILO releases on the High-Level Team's 2001 visit

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/gb/docs/gb282/pdf/gb-4.pdf>

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/gb/docs/gb282/pdf/gb-4-ax.pdf>

Online Burma Library: International Labour Organisation

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=827&lo=d&sl=0>

US Department of Labor report (1998)

<http://www.dol.gov/ILAB/media/reports/ofr/burma1998/main.htm>

**2.3.2 Roads, bridges, railways, gas pipelines and other construction projects**

All over Burma, 'development' projects such as the widening of roads and construction of roads, bridges, railways, and embankments are underway. The general population is affected by these projects either by being forced to relocate from the routes of these projects, for which they seldom receive compensation for the loss of their homes, or by being required to perform '*loh ah pay*' on these projects. It is not unusual for children and pregnant women to work on these 'development' projects.

One of the most notorious projects is the Ye-Tavoy railway, which was started in October 1993 and has been labelled the new 'Death Railway'. It has been estimated that some 120,000 people have been forced to build 110 miles of embankment 8 feet high and 12 feet wide. Hundreds of people have died on this project, be it through illness or exhaustion.

Human rights reports from the Sagaing division regarding the Border Area Development (BAD) programme have cited relocation, loss of homes, and lack of compensation as additional obstacles to sustaining livelihoods.

A controversial Unocal/Total gas pipeline in the south of Burma has created situations

whereby forced portering has been employed. Referring to allegations in 1991 and 1992, a hearing in a US federal court heard that the ‘plaintiffs essentially contended that Unocal ... is knowingly taking advantage of and profiting from SLORC’s practice of using forced labour and forced relocation...’.

**Websites:**

Burmese Government’s website on new construction throughout the country  
<http://www.myanmar.com/build/build.html>

Karen Human Rights Group  
<http://www.khrg.org>

**2.3.3 Tourism and development**

The overlap between gaining control of populations and projects carried out in the name of national development is great. Islands being demarcated as national parks in order to provide opportunities for tourism are having their existing populations removed. The islands off the south coast of Burma are now being developed for tourism. The populations of some of these islands have reportedly been forced to flee and relocate under conditions of extreme brutality. In one incident in September 1996, some 140 people were killed on Lanbi Island to make way for an ‘eco-tourism venture’ to be known as the Lanbi Island Marine National Park.

The military regime designated 1996 as ‘Visit Myanmar Year’, hoping to encourage 500,000 tourists to visit the country. The figure was downgraded to a more cautious 200,000, and the official start date of the visit year was set at 1 October 1996 in order to have more time to prepare the country. Country-wide ‘beautification’ programmes were put in place whereby communities were required to provide free labour and finance to white-wash houses to particular specifications and build new walls and facades for their houses and pavements. Visitors to Mandalay in April 1994 reported that orders had been given to clean up Mandalay Palace, including widening the roads on all four sides of the palace and dredging the 6-mile-long, 11-foot-deep moat. The widening of the roads required families with houses extending into the roadway to remove those parts of their homes or suffer the consequences. There is a strong connection between forced labour and tourism in contemporary Burma.

**Websites:**

Lonely Planet guide to Burma (includes section on the ethics of visiting Burma)  
[http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/south\\_east\\_asia/myanmar/](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/south_east_asia/myanmar/)

Online Burma Library: Tourism  
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=960&lo=d&sl=0>

**2.3.4 ‘Urban Development Programmes’**

‘Urban Development Programmes’ involve residents of a designated area having to move to ‘satellite towns’ at short notice. No comprehensive data is available regarding this practice. It has been reported that the authorities have disconnected electricity and water supplies at the old settlements before burning them. Compensation is irregular, assistance to build new homes is rarely given, and new sites have little infrastructure, including sewage facilities, sources of clean water, or access to health facilities. Once registered with the local authorities in these ‘satellite

towns', people are denied permission to move.

Following the 1988 uprising in Rangoon, some 200,000 'squatters' were forcibly moved out of the city to 'New Towns'. Poor people in popular tourist destinations such as Mandalay and Taunggyi have been moved away to sites away from tourists. The International Federation of Trade Unions reported in February 1995 that a slum clearance programme had destroyed the homes of some 1 million people in Rangoon and that the residents had been forced into new 'satellite towns'.

### **3 Needs and responses**

#### **3.1 Refugees from Burma**

##### **Website:**

Online Burma Library: Refugees

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=456&lo=d&sl=0>

##### **3.1.1 Thailand**

If not deterred by distance, the real threat of landmines en route, the belief that they will not be granted asylum, or accounts of how 'inhumane' refugee camps have become in recent years, refugees from Burma arrive in Thailand. Along the Thai–Burma border there are four main groups of refugees – Shan, Karenni, Karen, and Mon. The Shan are not recognised as refugees and there are no Shan refugee camps. The Karenni and Karen groups live in refugee camps and some of these camps also have a significant section for Muslim refugees. The Mon have been repatriated to designated sites only a few kilometres inside Burma.

Thailand is not a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. However, since 1979, Thailand has been a member of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR (Excom) which has reached a number of conclusions dealing specifically with the obligation not to forcibly repatriate people.

##### **Websites:**

UNHCR: Myanmar–Thailand border (August 2002)

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=MEDIA&id=3d5123051f&page=publ>

Refugees International: *Pushing Past the Definitions: Migration from Burma to Thailand*

<http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/Caouette&Pack.htm>

##### **3.1.2 Refugee camps**

Since 1984 a consortium of NGOs have provided a programme to provide material assistance to refugee camps along the Thai–Burma border. This consortium, the Burma Border Consortium (BBC) meets monthly in Bangkok for co-ordination meetings. Arriving in 1984, the first refugees from Burma were Karen, with Karenni refugees arriving in 1989 and Mon refugees in 1990. As each refugee group arrived they established refugee committees in order to provide relief assistance and to negotiate with NGOs.

The total border camp population, including the three Mon resettlement sites on the Burma side, totalled around 143,000 in early 2003. The rate of arrivals has been constant since the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) registered the refugees in 1999, averaging fewer than 900 per month for the past 3 years. A Karen refugee camp known as Mae La houses close to a quarter of the total population of refugee along the border. The camp populations are regarded by UNHCR as *prima facie* refugees.

Between 1995 and 1998, the camps began to be more tightly controlled after cross-border attacks by the Burmese army and DKBA forces. Many of the smaller camps were closed and consolidated camps came under Thai military control for the first time.

Refugee camps set up to house Burmese refugees following 1997 were radically different to previous camps. They were to be more 'temporary' than previous camps, and restrictions on the materials allowed to build houses were imposed. Bamboo thatch was prohibited from use, and the space allocated for each house was well below international standards. The 'temporary shelters' were set up in rows rather than in the usual 'village style' of previous refugee camps. Fences were constructed around some of the camps, and movement into and out of the camps was restricted. It was widely considered that a form of 'humane deterrence' was in operation.

Since 1998, the Thai government has officially identified refugees as 'temporarily displaced', determined under a restricted definition of 'fleeing fighting'. Previous to 1998 no formal status-determination process existed, and entry to camps depended upon camp officials. A process of screening by the Thai government with the establishment of the Provincial Admissions Boards was set up, with the Admission Boards meeting irregularly. Also in 1998, the Thai government invited UNHCR to establish offices in three provincial towns and to act as observers in the screening process and register people residing in refugee camps. This was the first time UNHCR had a presence along the Thai–Burma border to fulfil their protection mandate. Their limited role as observers in the screening process has proved restrictive.

As of 2003, Karen and Karenni refugees are no longer accepted by Thai authorities and are often subject to *refoulement* (forcible repatriation) on arrival.

### **3.1.3 Populations without refugee camps**

Unlike the Karen and Karenni populations, people fleeing persecution from Shan state have not been permitted to establish refugee camps in Thailand. As such, they are unable to receive humanitarian relief from the consortium of NGOs that provide material assistance to refugee camps along the border. Historically, Shan people entering Thailand have been viewed as seasonal labour for orchard farming and construction sites. However, in July 1996, a group of Shan volunteers in Thailand made an urgent appeal to UNHCR. They drew attention to the persecution by the Burmese army and asked to be able to set up refugee camps. In particular, they wanted to alleviate the suffering of the children, the sick, and elderly grandparents who had been forced across the border. The Thai government continues to deny that refugees from Shan state exist. It is estimated that Shan refugees have been arriving in Thailand at an average rate of at least 1,000 per month for the last few years.

A report detailing rapes of Shan women inside Burma has once again highlighted the need for some sort of recognition of Shan refugees in Thailand. Survivors of rape who managed to reach Thailand have no protection, no access to humanitarian aid or to counselling services.

Thousands of people have fled Burma, many for exactly the same reasons as refugees in camps, and have not entered refugee camps. They have instead joined the exploited and often underpaid factory workers, construction workers, domestic servants, and sex workers currently residing in Thailand.

#### *Repatriation and attempts at refoulement*

Following a cease-fire agreement between the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and the Burmese authorities in 1996, some 10,000 Mon people who, under Thai military pressure, 'spontaneously repatriated' did so with no UNHCR assistance or monitoring. The 'returnees' moved to designated sites only a few kilometres inside Burma, due in part to fear of returning to their villages of origin. No international agency with a mandate for protection has access to these areas. In April 1996, at the height of the 'repatriation', there were as many as 500 new arrivals to the refugee camps on the Thai side of the border. People were fleeing forced portering, forced taxation, persecution, and forced labour on the Ye-Tavoy railway.

Thailand has made sporadic attempts at *refoulement* of Burmese refugees. During the 1997 military offensive by the Burmese army on the KNU, a number of the people fleeing were sent back across the border by Thai authorities. During the night of 25 February, women and children were separated from the men in a village known as Bong Ti. It is known that about 230 men were sent back to the village of Htee Khee on the Burma side of the border and were told by the Thai Ninth Division to fight or surrender. Women and children were granted access into Thailand and an arbitrary decision-making process for boys less than 13 years of age and men over 60 years of age was undertaken to allow asylum. Also on 25 February, approximately 300 women and children were loaded onto trucks from the site of Pu Nam Rawn and were taken to Ratchaburi, and from there were forcibly repatriated to Mya Pho Hta. On 26 February approximately another 600 women and children received the same treatment.

By 1 March 1997, following intense international criticism, *The Nation* newspaper reported the abrupt halt to the relocation and repatriation of thousands of Karen refugees. However, on 9 and 10 March further 'pushbacks' occurred on some 3,300 people.

On 29 May 1997, with the knowledge of UNHCR, some 430 people from Shan state were 'escorted' to the border by approximately 150 Thai armed personnel and were *refouled*. Between 2 and 5 June of the same year, a group of Mergui-Tavoyans were subjected to *refoulement*. Approximately 470 women, children, sick, and elderly were trucked down to an area of the border and were told to start walking back to Burma. This group of people were said to be in very poor physical condition, having been displaced inside Burma for approximately three months prior to attempting to reach the Thai border.

Maybe the most disturbing act of *refoulement* took place on 6 June 1997. Between 300 and 400 Mon refugees who had sought asylum in Thailand were repatriated with

only two days' notice. These people were villagers under the direction of splinter group of the New Mon State Party (NMSP) known as the Mon Army Mergui District (MAMD). This splinter group had surrendered to the Burmese military regime on 24 May 1997. During the time before the surrender of MAMD, Thai authorities would not allow these people to return to their village. After the surrender, these people were told to return to Burma. UNHCR took on an 'observer' role at this repatriation. Following their return, reports were received that the men, women, and children were used as forced labourers to build an army base. Exits to their village were blocked by Burmese army troops, and freedom of movement was severely restricted within the village.

#### *UNHCR involvement*

Prior to 1998, UNHCR was not permitted by the Thai authorities to establish a presence at any point along the border in order to carry out its protection mandate. UNHCR personnel were only able to visit the camps after prior agreement from the Thai authorities.

UNHCR determined whether individuals who applied at their office in Bangkok in person were 'Persons of Concern' (POC) to UNHCR. Those who were determined as being POC were then further divided into those who have a 'secondary fear of persecution' in the border camps (termed 'non-border cases') and those who did not have a 'secondary fear of persecution' (termed 'border cases'). During 1996 the categorisation of people as 'border cases' became a particularly problematic phenomenon, since it left people who were recognised as Persons of Concern with limited options. Persons of Concern from the border were only accepted into a 'safe area' in Ratchburi Province if they were ethnic Burmans or if they could provide a 'secondary fear of persecution' by non-state agents at the border. All other Burmese Persons of Concern were termed 'border cases', were denied UNHCR assistance, and were advised to return to make the illegal journey back to the border by themselves. Being a Person of Concern to UNHCR is not recognised in any meaningful way by the Thai authorities – it does not provide protections against deportation or detention.

UNHCR's lack of participation in the repatriation of Mon refugees in 1996, their reluctance to make public statements upon acts of *refoulement* by Thai authorities, and their 'observer' role at repatriations that do not follow international standards have been heavily criticised by NGOs working in the field.

Since 1998, UNHCR have been allowed by the Thai authorities to have 'observer' status along the Thai–Burma border. They have opened field offices in towns along the border in order to carry out their protection mandate. However, their limited role as observers has proved restrictive.

#### **3.1.4 Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is not a signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. In March 1978, operation *Nagamin Sit Sin Yay* (King Dragon Operation) had been launched by the Burmese, targeting the Rohingya due to their citizenship status (see above section on the persecution of Muslims). Following this, large numbers fled to Bangladesh – the Bangladesh government claimed that more than 250,000 had sought refuge and the Burmese authorities put the figure at less than 150,000. The relationship between the two countries was strained due to this

event.

In 1991-2, some 250,000 Rohingyas once again fled from Burma and a further exodus from Burma to Bangladesh occurred in 1996 and 1997. The main method for 'resolving' the Rohingya issue has been through bilateral agreements directly between Burma and Bangladesh, i.e. sometimes without the desired 'tripartite' agreements that involve UNHCR.

**Website:**

UNHCR Northern Rakhine state (May 2002)

<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=MEDIA&id=3cee10f54&page=publ>

*Refugee camps*

In 1978, thirteen refugee camps were established in Bangladesh for some 250,000 refugees. In 1991-2, twenty refugee camps were set up again for more than 250,000 Rohingya Muslims fleeing persecution by the Burmese army.

Refugee camps were congested, had limited water and sanitary services, and access to education was restricted. Refugees' movements were restricted and they were not allowed to seek employment or engage in any activities outside the camps. Until mid 1996, no formal schooling was allowed in some of the camps.

*Repatriation and UNHCR involvement*

Towards the end of the 1970s, UNHCR became involved in a controversial repatriation of Rohingya Muslims who had fled persecution in Burma. A large UN relief programme was co-ordinated by UNHCR from May 1978. A bilateral agreement between Bangladesh and Burma on repatriation was made in July 1978 and by the end of 1979 more than 180,000 people had been repatriated. With a limited presence inside Burma, UNHCR spent US\$7 million on projects to assist reintegration.

Following the 1991-2 exodus from Burma, UNHCR provided the refugees with dry rations, clothes, and fuel for cooking. Another bilateral agreement between Bangladesh and Burma was made in 1992. UNHCR was finally allowed to have a presence in Rakhine state in Burma in 1993, and facilitated the voluntary repatriation of refugees from 1994. Questions over the 'voluntariness' of the repatriation were posed by NGOs at the time, but in UNHCR's assessment people were better off in their homes in Burma than in refugee camps in Bangladesh. Their presence in Rakhine state to monitor the return has raised serious doubts by NGOs about their effectiveness.

A further exodus from Burma to Bangladesh occurred in 1996 and 1997. Bangladeshi forces attempted *refoulement*, during which time UNHCR made public statements calling for a halt to the forced repatriation.

UNHCR has a continued presence inside Burma to carry out reintegration projects and continue a dialogue with the military regime over the Rohingya citizenship issue. They have suggested that a remaining 21,000 refugees in Bangladesh should be settled temporarily as the Burmese authorities are unwilling to accept their return and

donors are unwilling to fund the Rohingya operation indefinitely.

**Website:**

Medicines Sans Frontieres (Holland): *10 Years for the Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: Past, Present and Future* (March 2002)

<http://www.msf.org/source/downloads/2002/rohingya.doc>

**3.1.5 India**

In 1998, the USCR estimated that the number of Burmese refugees in India was around 40,000. Ethnic Chin from Chin state and the western Sagaing division in north-west Burma have fled to Mizoram state in north-east India to avoid forced labour and military persecution. Following the 1988 uprising, a number of Burmese 'students' fled to India. Several pro-democracy organisations are based in India, free from the restrictions imposed on similar groups in Thailand.

The Indian government has widespread sympathy for the Burmese pro-democracy movement in India, and in particular for Dew Aung San Suu Kyi, who spent several years in Delhi when her mother was the Burmese ambassador to India. In 1998, seventy-five members of India's parliament signed a petition supporting the NLD's call to allow the Burmese parliament elected in 1990 to meet.

An unprecedented joint military operation, known as 'Operation Golden Bird' was started in 1995 against ethnic insurgents along the border. This was, however, called off halfway through by the Burmese regime in protest at the Indian government's award of the prestigious Nehru Peace Prize to Aung San Suu Kyi.

In recent years the Indian Government has been establishing stronger military and trade ties with Burma, which has resulted in greater pressure on refugees in India.

*Urban refugees and UNHCR involvement*

There are a number of Burmese 'students' and Chin in Delhi, many of whom are Persons of Concern to UNHCR. Burmese refugees in Delhi are able to study, either to go on to further education or at university level.

**Website:**

Prospect Burma

<http://www.prospectburma.org/>

**3.1.6 China**

Following the 1988 uprising, China was one of the countries that the military regime was able to turn to for military support. In the 1990s the Beijing government became the regime's strongest ally. Between 1990 and 1997, China furnished as much as US\$3 billion's worth of military equipment to the Burmese army. This included fighter aircraft, tanks, artillery, radar, signals intelligence equipment, and electronic warfare equipment. The Chinese armed forces also provided training for Burma's army, air force, and navy. This assistance was mainly in return for access to intelligence information on India's military activities and Burma becoming a market for Chinese goods. Having China as an ally in international forums such as the UN had, until the late 1990s, assisted Burma in that they avoided discussions of their own human rights record.

### *Urban refugees*

There is an unknown number of Burmese refugees in south-west China. Little is known about this group.

#### **3.1.7 Outside Asia – resettlement in industrialised countries**

Since 1988, thousands of Burmese students have been resettled in the USA, Canada, Australia, and Europe. Several western governments have provided funding to non-violent Burmese activists and journalists in exile with the aim of strengthening the pro-democracy movement inside Burma. Two radio stations, the Democratic Voice of Burma (based in Oslo), and Radio Free Asia's Burmese section (based in Washington, DC), have been funded in this way.

#### **Website:**

UNHCR: 1951 UN Convention and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees  
[http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/+AwwBmeJAIS\\_www3wwwwwwwhFqA72ZR0gRfZNtFqrpGdBnqBAFqA72ZR0gRfZNCfQ1WK9WagdDVnDBodDaBnLBDzmxwwwwww/opendoc.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/+AwwBmeJAIS_www3wwwwwwwhFqA72ZR0gRfZNtFqrpGdBnqBAFqA72ZR0gRfZNCfQ1WK9WagdDVnDBodDaBnLBDzmxwwwwww/opendoc.pdf)

#### **3.2 Vulnerable groups**

The military regime in Burma commits human rights abuses with complete impunity, and it can be said that the entire population is in one way or another vulnerable. Thus, the concept of 'vulnerability' and 'vulnerable groups' inside contemporary Burma is a complex issue encompassing a number of considerations including gender, ethnicity, urban/rural location, age, and past political allegiances. What follows are some examples of why people could be considered vulnerable.

#### **Website:**

Online Burma Library: Trafficking  
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=505&lo=d&sl=0>

##### **3.2.1 Children**

Female children are vulnerable to being trafficked through brokers and sold into prostitution or domestic service in neighbouring countries (see next section).

Burma is believed to have more child soldiers than any other country in the world. It is supposed that 70,000 or more of the Burmese army's estimated 350,000 soldiers may be children (Human Rights Watch, 2002). From the age of 11, male children live under the real threat of being forced into the Burmese army, where they are subjected to beatings and systematic humiliation during training. Once trained, they must engage in combat, participate in human rights abuses against civilians, and are regularly beaten and abused by their officers. They are refused contact with their families and face severe reprisals if they try to escape (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Another method of recruitment is the *Ye Nyunt* system (*Ye Nyunt* means 'Brave Sprouts'). This is a system whereby Burmese army battalions take in young boys and send them to school from the battalion base. There are between 50 and 100 *Ye Nyunt* camps at battalion bases, each with 50-200 boys. Originally this system was for orphaned or displaced boys, but now boys are being kidnapped and forced into these

military camps. Children aged 7 and up participate in military training with weapons wearing military uniforms. Regularly battered, allowed no contact with their families, and beaten by the entire group if caught attempting to escape, these boys must ultimately join the army once physically strong enough, usually between the ages of 12 and 16 (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Again, no precise numbers can be obtained, but it is estimated that some 6,000-7,000 children are in the combined non-state armies (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Some children join opposition group armies to avenge past abuses by Burmese forces against their families, whilst others are forcibly conscripted. Whilst some of these groups are interested in demobilising their child soldiers, others deny their existence despite evidence to the contrary.

The military regime has to date failed to take any action to end child soldiering and has actually denied that the problem exists. Refugee camps in neighbouring countries are not open to deserters from the Burmese army, and official recognition by UNHCR is almost impossible for them to obtain.

Children within Burma are required to carry out forced labour on a regular basis (see section 2.3.1 on forced labour).

#### **Websites:**

Human Rights Watch

<http://www.hrw.org>

Human Rights Watch: 'My Gun Was As Tall As Me'

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/burma/index.htm>

Relief Web, Myanmar (includes details of Security Council day-long debate on children and armed conflict)

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/vCD/Myanmar?OpenDocument&StartKey=Myanmar&ExpandView>

Save the Children Fund, Regional Publications (includes child labour publications)

[http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/development/reg\\_pub/index.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/development/reg_pub/index.htm)

Online Burma Library: Children

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=641&lo=d&sl=0>

### **3.2.2 Women**

Amongst the ethnic groups along the Thai-Burma border it has been widely considered that rape is used by the Burmese military as a weapon of war. A past Earthrights International Report published in February 1998, *School for Rape*, began research into this subject as a specific theme of human rights documentation.

In July 2002, a report, *Licence to Rape*, was published by the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) and the Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN), both based in Thailand, documenting 173 incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence involving 625 girls and women. These rapes had been committed by Burmese troops in Shan state alone, mostly between 1996 and 2001. The report revealed that the

Burmese military regime is allowing its troops to 'systematically and on a widespread scale commit rape with impunity in order to terrorise and subjugate the ethnic peoples of Shan state'. The report gave clear evidence that rape is officially condoned as a 'weapon of war'. According to the report, officers committed 83 per cent of the rapes, often in front of their troops; 25 per cent of the rapes resulted in death; and over half were gang-rapes.

Subsequent to this report the Burmese regime claimed to have launched an investigation which concluded the allegations were unfounded. Researchers of the report received threats and were harassed in Thailand following publication. The Special Rapporteur on Myanmar appointed by the UN High Commission on Human Rights visited Burma in November 2002, refusing to accept the junta's invitation to investigate the rape incidents, instead stating that the UN would make its own independent investigation. An investigative report published in December 2002 by the US State Department verified what was contained in the *Licence to Rape* report. Also, an invitation to Amnesty International to visit Burma for the first time was considered to have been a result of this report.

When forced labour is required, women and children are often the family members that undertake this task, due to the men being vulnerable to accusations of assisting insurgents, being beaten, or being taken as porters.

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) is considered to be the only opposition army that has women and girl soldiers. Reportedly, it still, on occasions, forcibly conscripts girls under the age of 18 (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Undocumented migrant women from Burma are doing 'sex work' in countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Japan. Burmese women who migrate, much like other people migrating around the world, leave their homes and families in a poor country with the goal of moving somewhere perceived as richer, with more opportunities for work. Women from Burma are also migrating from an oppressed society, run by a military regime that does not respect any human rights, let alone women's rights.

Women from Burma are also vulnerable to being trafficked through brokers and sold into prostitution or domestic service in neighbouring countries. 'Closed brothels' are venues in which sex is sold but which do not advertise; women are not allowed to leave the premises and may be paying off a 'debt' to the broker who sold her to the brothel. This practice is known as a 'modern form of slavery' and reports by Human Rights Watch have documented this practise.

**Websites:**

Shan Human Rights Foundation Women's Desk and Shan Women's Action Network:  
*Licence to Rape* report (May 2002)

[http://www.shanland.org/shrf/Licence to Rape/licence to rape.htm](http://www.shanland.org/shrf/Licence%20to%20Rape/licence%20to%20rape.htm)

US State Department: Investigation of Burmese Military Rape of Ethnic Women, Trip Report

<http://www.three.pairlist.net/pipermail/burmanet/20021209.txt>

US State Department's *Trafficking in Persons Report* (June 2003)  
<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2003/>

Online Burma Library: Women  
<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=642&lo=d&sl=0>

### **3.2.3 Men**

Men, particularly in the ethnic areas, are particularly vulnerable to being taken as 'porters' for military offensives or being accused of assisting insurgents and therefore beaten, tortured, or killed. There are reports from Arakan state that men may join the army in order to avoid being taken as porters.

In some villages, the role of village headman is rotated regularly due to the dangerous nature of the role. In areas that are regularly visited by military personnel, there have been occasions when women have taken on this role in order to avoid the extreme human rights abuses received by the men.

Men are also forcibly conscripted into the army and, unless able to pay a bribe to avoid conscription, are expected to serve for fifteen years. It is thought that the majority of new recruits are forcibly conscripted. Most of the political prisoners in labour camps or jails throughout Burma are men.

### **3.3 Civil society**

The history of civil society – considered here to mean the institutions and groupings that are autonomous from government – in Burma is complex. According to Steinberg (1999), civil society died under the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) from 1962-88, or 'more accurately, it was murdered'. Fink (2001) points out that following the 1988 uprising, the beginnings of a civil society re-emerged, with independent organisations springing up and unions being formed by artists, actors, civil servants, and housewives. These organisations were, however, suppressed rapidly thereafter. Liddell (1999) points out that Burmese people do not enjoy fundamental freedoms and that, as such, the development and maintenance of a civil society in contemporary Burma cannot occur.

Within contemporary Burma there is no freedom of speech, freedom of the press, or freedom of association. The media is highly regulated, with the government holding a monopoly on television, radio, and the press. All media is officially controlled and censorship is strict. It is considered that these monopolies are instruments of propaganda, and most Burmese tune in illegally to the Burmese language version of the BBC or to the exile-run Burmese section of Radio Free Asia (RFA) or the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB).

Among indigenous organisations, while the government has permitted the establishment of NGOs, thus far none of those formed are independent of government control and only the churches work with limited organisational and operational freedom. In most war-affected areas, however, the churches have been effectively banned from providing assistance.

#### **Websites:**

Democratic Voice of Burma

<http://www.communique.no/dvb/>

Relief Web, International Crisis Group (ICG), 6 December 2001

<http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf/s/40B952F11ED12A4985256B1B005B1057>

Civil Society for Burma

<http://www.csburma.org>

Online Burma Library: Civil society

<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=582&lo=d&sl=0>

### **3.4 International community and international NGOs**

Few international NGOs operate in Burma, although the number has increased in recent years. This is partly due to concerns about human rights abuses and corruption within the government, which make it difficult to work effectively, and partly because officials at the national and local levels are deeply suspicious of foreign assistance. Permission to operate is dependent upon the negotiation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the SPDC, and operational difficulties have been encountered by NGOs in the past. Nevertheless, some NGO assistance is provided in urban relocation sites. Among the ethnic minority areas, NGOs have been permitted to work in Arakan state, where UNHCR and three international NGOs have been permitted to assist with the return of Rohingya Muslim refugees returning from Bangladesh. These agencies have, however, been powerless to prevent the continued displacement of Muslim villagers. For these reasons, the impact of assistance by NGOs with a presence in Burma is minimal.

The ICRC withdrew from Burma in June 1995 due to lack of standard access to prisoners and reopened an office in Rangoon in 1999.

#### **Websites:**

ICRC

<http://www.icrc.org/eng>

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

<http://www.mm.undp.org/>

UNICEF

<http://www.unicef.org/myanmar/>

Save the Children Fund (UK)

<http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/>

International Rescue Committee

<http://www.theirc.org>

Jesuit Refugee Service

<http://www.jrs.net/>

Medicines Sans Frontieres (MSF)

<http://www.msf.org/>

Amnesty International  
<http://www.amnesty.org/>

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

<http://www.hrw.org/>

World Report 2003

<http://www.hrw.org/wr2k3/asia2.html>

Burma/Thailand: No Safety in Burma, No Sanctuary in Thailand

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/burma/>

Burma/Bangladesh: Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh: Still No Durable Solution

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/>

Norwegian Refugee Council

<http://www.nrc.no>

US Committee for Refugees (USCR)

<http://www.refugees.org/>

World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)

<http://www.omct.org/>

#### **4 Other resources**

##### **4.1 Burmese newspapers**

*The Irrawaddy* is published by the Irrawaddy Publishing Group (IPG). IPG was established in 1992 by Burmese citizens living in exile and is not affiliated with any political party or organisation. *The Irrawaddy* seeks to promote press freedom and access to unbiased information.

*The New Light of Myanmar* is the English language daily newspaper. Its domestic news reinforces government policy, it highlights the 'national objectives' of government and its content is strictly monitored. Editors, reporters, and their families remain answerable to the military authorities.

##### **Websites:**

*The Irrawaddy*

<http://www.irrawaddy.org/>

*The New Light of Myanmar*

<http://www.myanmar.com/nlm/>

*The Myanmar Times*

<http://www.myanmar.com/myanmartimes/>

##### **4.2 Other electronic resources**

Amnesty International

*Myanmar: Lack of Security in Counter-Insurgency Areas*, AI 16/007/2002 (July 2002)

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA160072002?open&of=ENG-MMR>

*Myanmar: Torture of Ethnic Minority Women*, AI 16/017/2001 (July 2001)

<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA160172001?open&of=ENG-MMR>

Asian Human Rights Commission & Asian Legal Resource Centre

<http://www.ahrchk.net>

Burma Campaign UK

<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk/>

Burma Centrum Nederland

<http://www.xs4all.nl/~bcn/>

Burma Fund

<http://www.burmafund.org>

Chin Human Rights Organisation

<http://www.chro.org>

*Cultural Survival Quarterly*, Burma edition, Autumn 2000

<http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/csq/index.cfm?id=24.3>

Free Burma Coalition

<http://www.freeburmacoalition.org/>

Human Rights Watch

*Out of Sight, Out of Mind: Thai Policy toward Burmese Refugees*, Vol. 16, no. 2, February 2004.

<http://hrw.org/reports/2004/thailand0204/thailand0204.pdf>

Karen Human Rights Group

<http://www.khrg.org>

National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB)

<http://www.ncgub.net>

National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, Human Rights Documentation Unit, *Human Rights Yearbook 2000: Burma (Myanmar)*

<http://www.ibiblio.org/obl/docs/yearbooks/Main.htm>

Online Burma Library

<http://www.burmalibrary.org>

UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar

<http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu2/7/a/mmya.htm>

US State Department reports

<http://usinfo.state.gov/regional/ea/burma/>

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Images Asia et al., *All Quiet on the Western Front? The Situation in Chin State and Sagaing Division, Burma*. Chiang Mai, January 1998.

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—, *A Strategy of Subjugation: The Situation in Ler Mu Lah Township, Tenasserim Division*. December 2001.

—, *Easy Targets: The Persecution of Muslims in Burma*. May 2002.

Lahu National Development Organisation, *Unsettling Moves: The Wa forced resettlement program in Eastern Shan State*. 2002.

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