



MYANMAR

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Periodic Review

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International Campaign to Ban Landmines

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This submission was prepared by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), which is a global network in over 90 countries that works for a world free of antipersonnel landmines and cluster munitions, where landmine and cluster munition survivors can lead fulfilling lives. The Campaign was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

Information in this submission is drawn from Landmine Monitor research and reporting. Landmine Monitor (re-named Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor in 2010) is a project of the ICBL. It is a civil society-based program providing research and monitoring on progress made in eliminating landmines, cluster munitions, and other explosive remnants of war. It is renowned for its independent and impartial monitoring and has become the de facto monitoring regime for the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and On Their Destruction (also known as the Mine Ban Treaty).

In 2004 the ICBL launched a special campaign on Myanmar aimed at halting the use of landmines by all armed actors within the country. The ICBL has consistently encouraged the authorities in Myanmar to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty.

Summary

Landmine Monitor has documented credible reports of the Myanmar military forcing civilians to remove antipersonnel mines from the ground, without training or protective equipment, and forcing civilians to carry equipment for the military in areas where the danger of antipersonnel mines exists—on some occasions using civilians as human minesweepers. Such activities constitute a threat to the right to life, liberty and security of person as stipulated in Article 3 of the UDHR. The ICBL has consistently encouraged the authorities in Myanmar to end such practices, to halt the military's extensive use of antipersonnel landmines, and to accede to the Mine Ban Treaty.

Activities which constitute a threat to the right to life, liberty and security of person as stipulated in Article 3 of the UDHR

Forced Labor for Mine Clearance and Portering in Mined Areas

Since 1999, Landmine Monitor has received and published credible reports of national Army units forcing civilians, without training or protective equipment, to clear areas suspected or known to contain antipersonnel mines, and forcing civilians to porter for the military in areas suspected or known to contain antipersonnel mines. Following are some examples from 2009 and 2010

In March 2010, a villager from the area near Baw Ga Li in Kayin state told the Monitor that the Army had ordered villagers to clear mines. He said the villagers took a 5-foot piece of bamboo and fastened two curved metal tines to the end of the pole and used it to scratch the ground until wires of a Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) made antipersonnel mine were exposed. They then cut one of the wires, lifted the device and disposed of it. The villagers state they learned this method a soldiers doing it.¹

In December 2009, the Army required villagers from Gamndoe, Khupyang, Khupyangdoe, Thaeki and Hoki in Thandaung township to move in front of troops to clear the road between Thandaung and Baw Ga Li, also in Kayin state. The Army had required the villagers to do this each of the past few years.²

In December 2009, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) laid antipersonnel mines in Thandaung township on the road between Army camps at Kaw They Der (near junction of Taungoo-Mawchi and Taungoo-Busakee roads) to the east at Tha Eh Hta, also in Kayin state. The KNLA warned villagers in the area that if forced to porter for the military they should refuse to do so unless the military walked in front. In late December, villagers from Gkaw Thay Der, Gkaw Ko Koh, Ler Koh, Wa Thoh Koh and Gklay Soh Kee were ordered to porter rations to the Tha Eh Hta camp, but refused to do so because of the presence of mines, after which the Army ordered them to proceed through the jungle on a little used track.³

The following incidents were recorded by the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) since early 2009:

-On 4 September 2009, SPDC soldiers from LIB #60 and LIB #351 entered Maw Bweh village, eastern Hlaingbwe township, seized four villagers and ordered them to clear landmines for the soldiers.

-Between October 2009 and January 2010, residents of Baw Ga Li and the surrounding villages in Thandaung township reported that car and truck drivers were frequently ordered to drive ahead of military vehicles, in case the KNLA had laid landmines on the road.

-In November 2009, villagers in Htwee Thee Auh, northern Hpapun township, were ordered by commander Myo Maw Maw of LIB #541 to clear landmines. Two villagers were subsequently killed while demining.

-In May 2009, KHRG interviewed several families of Htee Bper village, T'Moh village track, eastern Hlaingbwe township, who had fled after being forced by the military to build camps and fences, cut bamboo and tree posts, and carry rations. They stated that they fled the area because they were afraid of stepping on landmines while carrying out the labor.

-In early 2009, residents of southeast Hpapun township stated that they were forced to serve as porters and human minesweepers for army patrols.⁴

The ICBL has reported the specific details of similar incidents since 1999, which are contained in an appendix to this submission. Accounts of forced labor mine clearance have also been reported by the International Committee of the Red Cross, the International Labor Organization, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar; these are also cited in the appendix to this submission.

Recommendations for the government of Myanmar

The International Campaign to Ban Landmines recommends that the authorities in Myanmar:

1. order an immediate halt to the use of antipersonnel mines by the armed forces and proxies under its control;
2. order an immediate halt to the use of forced labor by the armed forces and proxies under its control, particularly for the purposes of mine clearance and portering in mined areas;
3. accede to the Mine Ban Treaty.

¹The Army only forces people to clear insurgent laid mines, most of which are self made, comprised of an explosive charge triggered by a pressure switch connected to batteries by wire. Humanitarian workers arranged for Landmine Monitor to interview informants on condition of anonymity. Rangoon, 18 February 2010.

² Resident of the area who spoke to Landmine Monitor on condition of anonymity, Rangoon, 19 February 2010.

³ Landmine Monitor meeting with Free Burma Rangers staff, Chiang Mai, 15 February 2010 and information provided to the Landmine Monitor by Karen Human Rights Group 6 April 2010.

⁴ Information provided to the Landmine Monitor by Karen Human Rights Group 6 April 2010.