

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 50/95 Fear for safety

28 February 1995

MYANMAR Myanmar refugees in Thailand

Amnesty International is gravely concerned for the safety of Myanmar refugees in Thailand near the border with Myanmar, who in the last two weeks have been at risk of attack by forces allied with the Myanmar military authorities. On 23 February 1995, armed men in plain clothes fired grenade launchers and AK-47 rifles at 20 unarmed Myanmar refugees who were in a truck which was travelling inside Thai territory. Don Kio Poon, the Thai driver, and two refugees, Me Paw (f) and Peh (f) were killed. Me Paw was five months pregnant. Eleven other refugees were seriously injured in the attack, including three children.

Amnesty International is urging all sides in the current conflict to respect human rights and to observe basic humanitarian standards.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In the last two weeks, forces of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Organization (DKBO), an armed group supported by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC, Myanmar's ruling military authorities) have been crossing from Myanmar territory into northwest Thailand, stealing supplies and entering refugee camps. They have reportedly distributed leaflets to refugees which threaten that *"Those who remain in the refugee camps will be considered as anti-Buddhist KNU [Karen National Union] and will be destroyed."*

The DKBO is a Buddhist Karen group which broke away from Myanmar's largest ethnic armed opposition group, the Karen National Union in December 1994, and subsequently joined the SLORC in its offensive against the KNU. On 27 January 1995, Manerplaw, the KNU's headquarters, fell to DKBO and SLORC forces, and the KNU lost Kawmoora, its last major base, on 21 February. As a result, some 10,000 refugees have fled into Thailand, where they remain scattered along the mountainous jungle border region.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

- urging the Myanmar military authorities to ensure that the DKBO and the Myanmar armed forces do not target civilians for attack, whether in Myanmar or across the border in Thailand;
- calling on the authorities to respect humanitarian and human rights law by ensuring that civilians are not deliberately attacked and are not subject to acts of reprisal and violence.

APPEALS TO:

1) General Than Shwe, Chairman
State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/o Ministry of Defence
+Signal Pagoda Road
Yangon (Rangoon)
Union of Myanmar (Burma)
Telegrams: General Than Shwe, Yangon, Myanmar
Telexes: 21316
Salutation: Dear General

2) Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary 1
State Law and Order Restoration Council
c/o Ministry of Defence
Signal Pagoda Road
Yangon (Rangoon)
Union of Myanmar (Burma)

Telegrams: Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Yangon, Myanmar

Faxes: +95 1 229 50

Salutation: Dear General

and to diplomatic representatives of Myanmar accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat,
or with your section office, if sending appeals after 11 April 1995.