

## **BURMESE MILITARY REPRISAL**

*Minority Karen civilians forced to flee through minefields or be conscripted to the enemy army!*

Dear friend,

In the middle of the muddy monsoonal season, the Burmese Military Junta launched a surprise campaign against the rebel forces of Karen people, the ethnic minority that controlled large portions of the Thai-Burmese border. This counter-insurgency campaign has been wildly successful, causing substantial losses for the rebel forces. However the main losers are not the combatants but the civilian villagers forced to flee their homes in the remote and impoverished Karen hills.

The Burmese military have deployed large numbers of soldiers to clear the villagers from great tracts of land in the Central Shan state. They have razed over 500 homes to the ground in 39 villages. Survivors are faced with two intolerable choices: 1) conscription into the enemy army; 2) bribing the army with enough money to hire mercenaries to take their place. Many of the Karen people choose to run for their lives to the border before the army even reaches them. This is a decision fraught with peril, as the border is on the other side of an extensive minefield.

Many have died in their attempt to escape and others are maimed by land mines in their efforts to escape. Despite these difficulties, an estimated 10,000 people have made it across the border. Survivors share shocking stories of soldiers who plundered and ransacked village after village. Soldiers confiscate their possessions and kill anyone who dares to oppose them, committing other acts of violence too heinous to mention.

Charlie Milbrodt – from **Living Word Ministries** in Changmai, North Thailand – has worked with the Karen people for the past 22 years. In his early days, Charlie would travel frequently into Burma to pray and advise the President of the Karen people as well as many government and military leaders.

*"When the problem broke out last month, our contacts along the border contacted us for help. It was another one of those **"There Must Be Something We Can Do"** moments. To make a long story short....we began meeting the needs of the Karen refugees arriving in Thailand.*

*"We have over 4,000 people on our border without the basic necessities of life... they came in with the clothes on their back. We have been providing basic supplies: tarps to erect temporary shelters, sleeping mats to get them off the ground, drinking water containers and eating utensils, mosquito nets for malaria prevention as well as basic food items.*

*"We have been filling in the gaps... because of our long standing relationship with the Karen people in Burma, we have regular contact with the planning and organizing committees. We told them up-front that we don't want to deliver and stockpile relief goods where other organizations have already sent things. We asked to be informed about the clusters of people that are not being reached. As a result we have been able to deliver with pinpoint accuracy, supplies that are vitally needed. We have been given the military clearance to deliver the goods to the right locations.*

*And so we are feeding 304 families in Mae Ue Sue, 84 families in Mae Salit Luang, and 322 families in Nong Bua" – Charlie Milbrodt.*

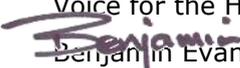
The Thai officials are expecting the violence to die down and the Burmese to return to their homes. Therefore officials are reluctant to recognise the Karen people legally as 'refugees', and to take on the resulting humanitarian burden. New arrivals are not given adequate shelter and don't really know where their next meal is coming from. With the number of Karen people arriving at the Thai border increasing every day, the **Living Word** team quickly realised that a better solution was needed.

A sympathetic farmer agreed to rent out 5 acres of his land so the Karen people could establish temporary shelter. For the equivalent of just USD\$300 rent per month, 322 families in Nong Bua now have a place to rest and have confidence that someone is taking care of them. This temporary camp is growing rapidly thanks to the leadership, planning and semblance of order present at the **Living Word** camp.

The **Living Word** team will make regular, fortnightly delivery of food packs to all three camps. Consisting of rice, noodles, cooking oil, canned fish, some fresh food items like squash, onions, garlic & green-leaf vegetables and other relief supplies. All these can be provided for just AUD\$15.00 per family pack!

Please prayerfully consider sending an emergency donation to help **Living Word** feed the Karen Refugees in Thailand. Every month, **Living Word Ministries** need another AUD\$21,300 to feed over 4364 people currently in their care. That's just \$4.80 per person per month.

*"We began this outreach with a generous gift from one of our partner churches. However, that gift is gone and the people still have vital needs. We have the man power; we have the government and military clearances, we have the vehicles and equipment necessary to orchestrate the outreach. We even have Gospel literature already printed in the Karen language....we simply need the funding to buy food, medicine and basic supplies for these people." - Charlie Milbrodt.*

Voice for the Hungry,  
  
 Benjamin Evans  
 Operations Manager  
 FTH Australia & New Zealand

**For more detailed information from Charlie on the situation check out**  
[www.feedthehungryaustralia.org/news.php](http://www.feedthehungryaustralia.org/news.php).

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 **Yes, I want to help!** Please accept my donation of: \$50 \$30 \$100 Other\$ \_\_\_\_\_

For:  Burmese Refugee Disaster Relief  
 General (Used for the project where it's needed most)  
 Feeding EveryChild EveryDay (Orphanage support)  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me the Take Away Hunger DVD

I pledge to send \$ \_\_\_\_\_ every month.

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