

Burma Action Group (SA Inc.)

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Eyewitness report on
Tabayin Killings
30 May 2003

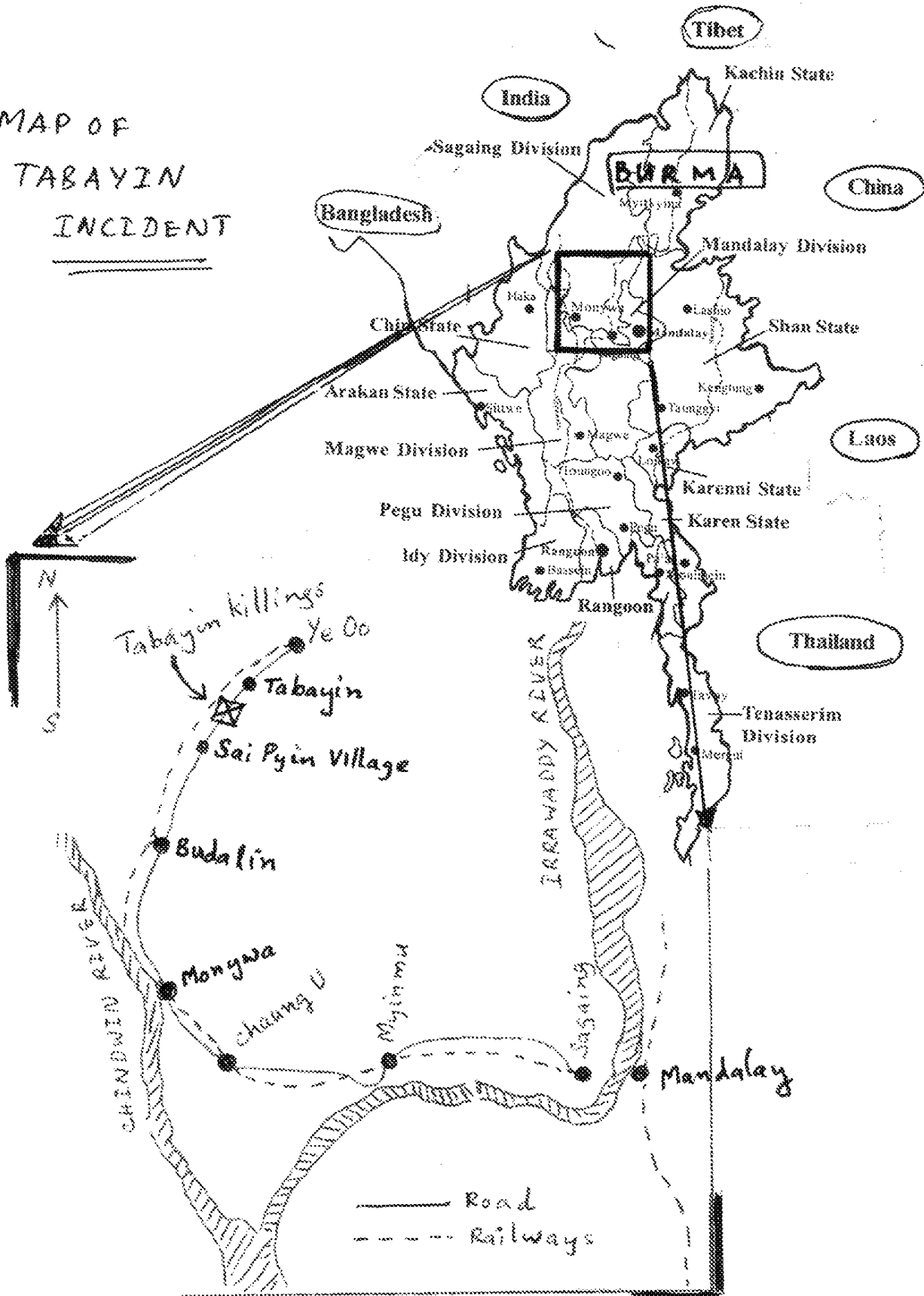
Reports enclosed in the CD *:

1. Preamble to the video evidence by Daw San San. [PDF and MPEG video]
2. Tabayin Killings by witness Daw Nyunt Nyunt [PDF and MPEG video]
3. Black Friday Updates by Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma [PDF]
4. National Council of Union of Burma Ad Hoc Commission report [PDF]

Burma Action Group in South Australia wishes to thank 1. National League for Democracy (Liberated Area – Australia) 2. National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma 3. Alternative ASEAN Network for Burma and 4. Burma Lawyer Council. We express our special thanks to those witnesses who have spoken out and everyone who helps these reports made possible.

* Minimum system requirement: Computer with Windows 98 and Pentium 166 MHz or higher, which can play multi-media MPEG video formats.

MAP OF
TABAYIN
INCIDENT



BURMA

The eyewitness accounts on Tabayin Killings 30 May 2003

Forewords by the translator

This report together with the companion multi-media CD try to present a comprehensive picture of the attack on the members of National League for Democracy (NLD) by the agents of Burmese military government on 30 May 2003. The brutal and unprovoked attack on the NLD, known as *Tabayin Killings*¹, took place when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the General Secretary of NLD, was touring mid-north Burma towns of *Monywa* and *Tabayin*. On the night of 30 May 2003, about 5,000 government agents attacked 300 NLD supporters with clubs, iron bars and sharpened bamboo sticks. This premeditated attack caused more than 70 NLD supporters dead. The timing of the attack also suggests that the military government have predicted a minimal response from the international community.

This is a translation of evidence by the witness **Daw Nyunt Nyunt**, who is the organizer for NLD in Northwest Mandalay Division. The reader will discover from her testimony that the government agents made an unprovoked attack on the NLD supporters. Daw Nyunt Nyunt was severely beaten by three persons –two were wearing Buddhist monk's robe. This video evidence was taken in mid-July 2003 inside Burma and being smuggled out by the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma – the exiled political group.

The *Tabayin Killings* is significant in many aspects. Firstly, contrary to military government claims, the attack was premeditated and being orchestrated at the highest level. The government's attempt to conceal its part in the attack were unsuccessful. Secondly, the Burmese military for several years is known for its lawless conducts and brutal killings of ethnic minority groups in the context of suppressing armed rebels. The *Tabayin Killings*, in contrast, the Burmese military had sought to kill mainly the ethnic Burman who offer no armed resistance. This is a clear sign of military stepping up oppression against un-armed civilian population. Of course, there were the killings of more than 3,000 un-armed protestors in August–September 1988. The military government this time, however, is unable to deny the unjust and brutal treatment of un-armed civilians.

The reader will appreciate the risks being taken by the eyewitness to give this evidence. There would also be other people who have made sacrifices for this video evidence to reach a wider public. The reader will surely find in these reports that the NLD members' discipline on the face of adversity and their unfailing commitment to the non-violent principle of resistance. Where the NLD in Burma have been making such sacrifices for the attainment of democracy in Burma, the international community must not to fail to take concrete step towards implementing the result of May 1990 elections.

Dr U Ne Oo (Translator)
Burma Action Group (South Australia)

¹ Tabayin, Depayin or Dipeyin.

Preambles by Daw San San

Elected Representative

Rangoon Division, Hseik-Kan Electorate

After completing the tour to northern Kachin State, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the General Secretary of National League for Democracy (NLD), had proceeded to Mandalay, Monywa and Sagaing Divisions ². In Monywa, there were about 500,000 people who came out to greet Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD. In Monywa, walking from the town entrance to the NLD office would normally take 20 minutes. The entourage had to move slowly because of the huge crowd and it took 4 hours to reach to the NLD office. It was late in the evening with only a small moon. At that time the electricity was cut (presumably by authorities). The 500,000 strong crowd had come out with lit candles, chanting "Long live Daw Suu, Long live NLD".



(Daw San San, NLD MP, Liberated Area)

It was to be a beautiful event. So many candle light were waving in the darkness, whilst Daw Suu was broadly smiling and greeting the people. People were throwing flowers on the path and over the NLD entourage. It was as memorable and very heartening.

But as the NLD entourage proceeded on their cars towards Tabayin through the dark of the night, there was a roadblock. It was a no moon night. About 30 trucks with lights on high beam suddenly came up on the back and in front of the entourage. There were also searchlights set up by the roadblock and, as has been threatened already by authorities, the killings took place. About 5,000 strong crowd

² Burma has 14 States and Divisions of which approximately equivalent in administrative terms.

of USDA ³ attacked 300 NLD supporters. There were people screaming for help, with blood everywhere. A car driver was beaten to death, one of his eyes poked out and his body dragged down from the drivers seat. Women's Penny shirts were ripped off. Scream for help from victims were heard. The monks⁴ were asked by victims not to attack.

It is obvious that the attack was a premeditated plan to thwart the NLD's tour. Here is an eyewitness account by Daw Nyunt Nyunt, who was on the scene with the NLD tour group. Daw Nyunt Nyunt is the NLD organiser for Northwest Mandalay Division. The National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma has taken this video evidence.

We must appreciate that her testimony puts her life at great risk. As she has been a witness to the event, she could be arrested, she could be put in jail and tortured, or she could even be "disappeared" by authorities.

However, as has been described by the witness, the situation is too unjust: These NLD members were not only been attacked, but also forced to become fugitives. She therefore believes that the truth must be made known to the public and that only when democracy is restored in Burma will there be free from such intimidation and violence. In this context she has agreed to give video evidence to the National Coalition Government of Union of Burma.

This video evidence was taken in mid July (2003), just after a month from the event. So the wounds inflicted on her body had began to heal, but the pain and the truth is still remain in her heart. Now lets hear the witness Daw Nyunt Nyunt speaks .

By

Daw San San

Elected Representative

National League for Democracy

Rangoon Division,

Hseik-Kan Electorate.

³ Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA) —the government-backed political organization.

⁴ The government agents disguised as Buddhist monks and attack NLD members.

Daw Nyunt Nyunt
National League for Democracy
Organiser, Northwest Mandalay Division

Eyewitness Account:



Eyewitness Daw Nyunt Nyunt recounts the attack on NLD members on 30 May 2003

We left *Monywa* town for *Tabayin* at about 10:00am. There was a contingent of local supporters gathered at the place where *Ahma* ⁵ was staying and therefore she had addressed them. Afterwards, we proceeded on our journey and on the way we had visited *Gyobyu Zawtika Monastery* to pay our respects to the monks. At that point, there were many more vehicles and people following us so we separated into two groups: one consisting of U Tin Oo (NLD–Executive) and the other with *Ahma* [here after, *Daw Suu*]. We then headed towards *Budalin* junction. We do that (separating into two groups) in order not to be delayed on our journey.

At the *Budalin* junction, we saw quite a few vehicles with loud hailers fitted on top and decorated with banners (organised by USDA, against the NLD tour) on the roadside. But since we had many more followers, including several motorcyclists, they did not harm us.

We arrived *Budalin* at about 1:30pm and Daw Suu launched a new branch of the NLD youth party. After that we had lunch at about 2:00–2:30pm. The suburb we were in was just a small one with not enough space for the group to have a proper rest. So we took

.. wherever there were USDA cars, there were 2–3 motor vehicle police present

a break near the local cemetery where U Thein Pe Myint, Burma’s famous journalist, is interred. We left that place in the late afternoon about 4:30–5:00pm. Along the way we saw more USDA cars. Everywhere we saw USDA cars, there were also two to three motor vehicle police equipped with walkie–talkies. These were a group of Dyna trucks about 10–13 in total.

⁵ Burmese word for an elder sister, here referred to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

We then arrived to *Sai Pyin Village*. In that village score of persons ⁶ were arrested because of organising a welcome for Daw Suu. We stopped outside *Sai Pyin* village, *Seikyaik* Tea Shop. I think the shop owner is a cousin of one of the arrested persons. There was again a strong crowd gathered at the Tea Shop that Daw Suu took a bit of time to address them. We left that village at about 7:00pm. Along the way we saw more glass tinted coaches. We had not seen any other traffic from *Budalin* heading towards *Tabayin*.

Our convoy consisted of : in the fore front a Datsun Sunny. After that was the vehicle of uncle U Tin Oo (NLD–Executive) vehicle. After that was the car driven by U Tun Aye. Our car in forth place was from Mandalay Northwest Division *Aungmyaythasan* and being driven by Kalarlay (aka. Mr Hla Myint). The car behind ours was another Datsun Sunny which carried a Television crew, a group of young people documenting Daw Suu’s trip. Following that car was Daw Suu’s car. About two or three cars from Sagaing or Monywa followed Daw Suus.

The last car that followed along in our convoy consisted of a group of monks, about 3 or 4 elder monks, together with 8–10 novices.

There were people coming to greet us from quite a distance. Some even had brought their lunch to wait for us. Notably, among the supporters there were very old and frail persons, who obviously had no capacity to organise anything significant (such as banners, flowers etc) so they had brought along *Tamar* branches (a common plant grown in central Burma) to greet us. At about *Sai Pyin* village, there were about 150 motorcyclists, both boys and girls, who also followed our entourage.

UNPROVOKED ATTACKS

When we left *Sai Pyin* village for *Kyiywalay*, it began to grow dark. At about *Kyiywalay* village, the crowd began to gather up and also began to get dark. Because of the many supporters, all of us including Daw Suu, were

⁶Daw Suu stopped at *Sai Pyin* village to speak to the family members of U Win Myint Aung, NLD MP elect, who is in detention.

waving our hands while the convoy was moving slowly through the crowd.

From one and a half or two miles ⁷ outside *Kyiywalay* village, there was scattered crowd of villagers visible along the road. At that point, we saw the USDA buses behind us switched on their headlights and began beating the villagers. These buses were not the small Hino buses, but large glass–tinted coaches.

A motorcyclist came to us to say that villagers were being beaten and asked us what to do. At the same time, I saw 3 motorcycles with each pillion passengers dressed in monks robe with yellow bands on their head ride past our vehicles. They straddled across the road behind Daw Suu’s vehicle. At that time Daw Suu’s vehicle was already in front of our car. I saw uncle U Tin Oo got down from his vehicle. The rest of us are now unable to move.

At this point we were able to see the villagers being beaten. Our supporters on motorcycles were also disoriented and did not know whether to move forward or backwards. We were also telling the younger persons not to get into the fights as they will be unable to differentiate between the villagers and the attackers. At that time, U Tin Tun, the organiser of NLD youth, came along to keep us calm and help us not to respond to this provocative action with violence. This, of course, we had reminded ourselves along at all times.

We then persuaded those who were on the ground to get into the bus. I was lowering myself for a cover, but could still see what was happening on the road. As we boarded our bus, about three glass–tinted coaches stopped parallel behind our cars, with their high beams up. At this point, some cars behind ours went past us. But our car couldn’t be move as there were vehicles in front of us. Then they started beating us.

I thought for a moment that they might just threaten us, because when were in *Madaya* town, we had a similar threat of nearly being beaten. In our bus we have three women onboard. Uncle U Chit Tin shielded us the women to protect us. The three women are

⁷ Mile, the British system of measurement is still used in Burma.

Daw Khin Aye Myint, another one nicked named *Atheylay* (the little ones), who is the daughter of U Ko Gyi ⁸, and myself. There were 13 of us on our bus. I cannot remember the names of them all, because we came from different suburbs.

As people on our bus were being beaten, I could also see the car in front of us, which was a utility type. About 15 attackers were beating people on that car. I was able to see although my head was lowered for protection. There were screams from the people, but beating went on. People from our bus were also screaming from pain. Uncle U Chit Tin was being hit against the frame of our bus. My back was being beaten with bricks. Blood was coming down everywhere, on my head too.

At the time I heard them shouting, "You sluts wearing *Penny Shirts* and wandering about must be punished." The attackers began to rip off our Penny Shirts ⁹. Our handbags, sling bags and necklaces were also stolen.

The attackers said, "These women are still not beaten yet". We (women) were manhandled and brought down from the bus by pulling our legs and arms. The attackers brought me down by my hair. As I dropped to the ground, the attackers continued to beat me.

As I was beaten, I saw my attackers. Two of them were dressed as monks. The other one wore a T-shirt, half legged-short pant, and a hat back-flapped. As he beat me, he said, "You the followers of *Kala's* wife Aung San Suu Kyi, what's the matter with you? We have to build roads and bridges. Which useful thing has she (referred to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi) done? You're going on this road and following *Kala's* wife." He used more of foul language to abuse us, which I can not repeat here. I was beaten on my arms and shoulder and then he poked a stick into my ear. My right ear became swollen instantly. My

bottom and back were also beaten. My head was hit twice and one inflicted wound.

As he beat me without restraint, there a more senior man shouted, "That's enough on that women", and then shouted "*Mee-Ye/Mee-Ye (Fire-Water)*" (code-word) and the attackers went back to their coaches. Then their coaches went back towards *Sai Pyin* village.

RESCUERS FROM THE VILLAGE

As I began to lose consciousness, I saw one monk and five people coming to our aid. I heard them saying, "Was that a road accident? No she has got beaten up. Were the attackers from USDA?" By the time the rescuers appears, *Atheylay* (woman on her bus) had disappeared. As I was not completely conscious I did not see where she was taken.

Before the rescuers arrived, I remembered that I tried to get back onto our bus, which is about ten feet away. I was concerned that I didn't have any shirt on and I tried to cover myself with my *longyi* ¹⁰. Even then (recalling attacking incident) the attackers wanted to rip off my *longyi*. My *longyi* however was heavily stained with the blood and cannot be rip off.

I asked the monk "Abbot please save me". I heard the monk and people saying, "Shall we arrange a trailer-jeep? Should we call a doctor?" As I was requesting the monk to save me, I lost consciousness again.

When I regain consciousness, there were five people from a neighbouring village. At this point, two people from the front car, Ma Kyi Kyi Myint and Maung Minn Thein Lay, asking these people either to take them with them or bring a *Saysaya* ¹¹ to save the rest of the people. They decided to go to local monastery. So I said I wanted to come along and I tried to get down from my bus.

As I got down from my bus and went towards the next car I lost the consciousness again. Then I remember a strongly built man was holding me with one arm and a torch light on the other. I intermittently passed out along the way, while the man called to me in order to sustain my consciousness.

⁸ U Ko Gyi is the Treasurer of Mandalay Division of NLD.

⁹Penny Shirts are made from locally grown products. Historically, during Burma's struggle for independence, and nowadays customarily, wear the Penny Shirt as a symbol of patriotism. The attackers rip off NLD members Penny Shirts as a protest.

¹⁰ Long skirt traditionally wear by Burmese woman.

¹¹ Indigenous medical practioner.

I then remember the other women on our bus and called out their names, "Ma Tin Myint, Ma Aye Myint", and said we should go with these villagers, but I heard no response from them.

As I looked around I saw uncle U Chit Tin ¹² lying with 3 large wounds on his head that were severely bleeding. He was vomiting blood as well. I heard him saying, "I had done my duty. I had done my duty. Tell the (NLD) headquarters". I can never forget this scene.

saw driver dead with half body still on car seat. His left eye was poked out ..

When I got round to the front part of the car, the driver was dead still half of his body on the car seat. His left eye was poked out. I think his name was Hla Myint. He was from our division, Mandalay Northwest.

I think I passed out again on the scene. The man who was holding me called to me again. He had in his arm a 12.5V torch light. We looked around the place. We saw many people by the road side. My head wound was bleeding at that time which I later noticed. I was feeling not much pain at that time because the wounds were still fresh. However, I felt dizzy and fainted from the loss of blood.

As we looked around the cars, there was the car in front of our bus driven by U Tun Aye. On the other (pointed at right hand side) there was a Datsun Sunny car being dragged at. There was also a yellow car behind ours left on the side of the road. Earlier when I was half conscious and on the bus, I heard attackers says, "Let pull this car off the road. Set it on fire." etc..

As we walked along the cars, there was no one left on these cars. There were people lying, mostly not moving, on the side of the road. I heard some murmurings in pain and the like. I called out the names of my women friends and did not receive any response. Ma Kyi Kyi Myint warned us that the attackers might come back again. We all proceed to the entrance of the village, at least I thought it was the entrance. The villagers guided us to the

village monastery, which is about one mile from the road. There were five villagers with us until we got near the monastery. Then four of them went into village in fear of retribution from authorities.

There was one young boy who had lost his motorcycle in the incident. He told he is afraid to go back home and asked if he could come with us. There were also two students who came along with us. All together it's five of us.

THE ANGELS

We went across a small stream. The bridge is only one and a half feet wide. The villager told us to take care crossing the bridge. I stumbled along with the help of the others. My feet lost all sensation. The boys had given me a pair of sandals to wear.

As we reached the monastery, the monk told us that any transport or any medical attention for us could not be arranged there. The villagers also dared not help us, the monk said. We were therefore placed in a room in the monastery compound. The monk gave us *Payake Ye* (holy water) to drink. It was about 8:00–8:30pm. I was only semi-conscious at that time.

At about 2:00am, we again heard the noise of more cars on the road. The other people hid me back behind the monastery in the bushes near a little pond. They were concerned that my white shirt was visible at night and that I might be found by the attackers. I was put in a safe place and the monk, a junior monk and the three other people went out to see what was happening on the road.

They heard the people on road were counting as how many people had been in which car etc. When I came to consciousness, I heard some cars went back to west and the others to the east. I was told the car went to west towards *Sai Pyin* village carried the dead and injured. We left four cars from our convoy, with one car burnt on the roadside. I also heard people on the road shouting car registration numbers etc.

The monk and our people came back from the road and I was brought back to the monastery. They had heard as those cars

¹² The military government still provide no information on whether U Chit Tin was injured or still alive.

leaving from the site and people shouting code words, "*Mandalay Hill, Yankin Hill, roast duck, roast duck*". As I mentioned earlier, when these people were attacking us, they used the code words, "*Ye–Mee, Ye–Mee (Fire/Water)*".

We then tried to sleep. As my clothes were stuck with blood stains, my companions brought me a pair of *longyi* and a shirt. We took a rest for a while and a little sleep. At about 3:30am the monk had woke us. He said he was concerned about our security and told us to leave the monastery.

As I was in so much pain from my injuries, I couldn't move well. So I asked the monk for a safe place to stay. However, he was so concerned for our security that he insisted we leave with the junior monk from the monastery as a guide. By that time, two other students had already left. The boy who asked to follow me still left with us.

As we did not have any money, I asked for some money from the monk. The monk provided us with about 1,700 *Kyats*¹³ which he got from his donation tins.

My hair was sticky with the blood. I could not tie or untie my hair. [Tape edited here] She gave me a towel to wrap up my head. Her head was also wrapped with a towel with bloodstains, but her head was not injured. My blue shirt was totally stained with blood so that I took it off and thrown it away. The boys helped me to walk. We arrived the railway station at about 5:00am. We first thought of staying near the bushes across the station. However, we decided to stay among people at the railway station in order to disguise ourselves.

TRAIN JOURNEY

By that time, we have not had a meal since 2:00pm the day before. We were therefore hungry and thirsty. One suggested of going to a teashop to get a snack. However, since we were looking too untidy (with blood stains) that we decided to buy some bananas and eat by the roadside. The bananas we ate were not quite ripe. My mouth was stained with blood and it was difficult to swallow.

¹³ Burmese currency. Approximately 1,000 Kyats may be exchanged to One United States Dollars.

I was beginning to feel the pain from my injuries. I could still walk but I could only sit down or stand up with the assistance of the two boys. This was due to injury on my back, which was beaten by a brick. I went to a nearby hut and asked permission to sit down on a soft chair. The women at that house were curious about the incident that took place at *Kyiywalay* the night before.

Not wanting to answer questions, I went down and sat on the railway track and wait for the train. As the sun came up, the heat and flies were buzzing around my head. I began to feel dizzy and was about to pass out. My companions (Ma Kyi Kyi Myint and two boys) were talking to me in order for me not to lose consciousness. At about 8:00am the train arrived.

It was a freight train. There were a lot of bananas and goods that were going to be transported and people waiting. We mixed in with the people to disguise ourselves. We had to climb up on the train, half my height. As I could not climb–up one boy had to pull me from my arms and the others pushed me up from behind to board the train.

The train was crowded so I begged the nearest passenger to give me his seat as I am too unwell. I sat down and the train went. The flies were surrounding my head, and the bloodstains smelled terrible. The train arrived at *Monywa* at about 12:00 noon.

At first we thought of going to the NLD office in *Monywa*. However, it was not safe to go to there so we decided to go to the monastery. We took two trishaws¹⁴ and reached the monastery. The monk in charge of the monastery was not there. We therefore asked for the other monks at the monastery to stay. We asked that we were from the NLD entourage whose members were wounded and killed the night before. We were taken to the side passage (to avoid being noticed by the public) and put in a secure place within the compound.

¹⁴ A paddle bicycle attached by a side–car – which is a common form of transport in cities across Burma.

SAFE REFUGE

We – the four of us like brother and sisters -- did not have any spare cloths except the ones we wore. The two boys didn't even have any sandal. Myself and Ma Kyi Kyi Myint did have pairs of sandals provided by others. [Tape edited here] The monk asked how he could help us. I said I needed to see a doctor. The doctor came to the compound in the evening [Tape edited here].

Up to that point, the others had thought that, since I had been able to continue along that journey, that my injuries were not that bad. I was actually beaten by three persons. As the doctor examined my injuries, everyone saw the severity of them and they were amazed at how I had been able to manage thus far.

The doctor gave me two intravenous injections. He advised not to put stitches on the cut on my head because the injury was days old. [Tape edited here] We were asked if we need any other assistance. We thanked the doctor for looking after us.

We were at that monastery for six days. The doctor visited us twice. On the fourth day, two more NLD people arrived to the monastery. These were the people who run off further north. That is why they arrived a bit later. They were also looked-after by the doctor.

During our stay, there was fear that the military intelligence might come around to check the compound. The monks arranged very quickly a getaway car and to take us to a safe place. We returned to the monastery later.

On the seventh day the monk asked whether we would like to stay longer. The monk said Razali (UN Special Envoy) was coming to Monywa and that a likely step up of arrest on NLD supporters. The monk offered us to stay until the situation become stable. We

said we wouldn't stay any longer and we would leave the next evening.

The next morning, a local policeman informed the monks that there would be a serious search on the compound for a woman who was on the wanted list. The policeman asked the monks to hide us urgently. The monks immediately arranged the transport and, even an umbrella as it was raining, and gave the trishaw operator directions to reach the bus station safely. To be sure the monks also put another person on a bicycle to guide us through the safe way.

To sum up, we have been beaten, arrested, become fugitives and losing contact with our leaders. Furthermore, I still cannot get back home. I remember one thing that said by Daw Suu. It was related to the incident in *Madaya* Town. In *Madaya*, the members of USDA stoned the NLD entourage and some of our boys were hurt. At that point Daw Suu said when we talked about justice that there has to be only one standard. There is no such thing as one standard of justice for some people and another standard for the others. So Daw Suu went into the police station and opened a case against the people who threw stones at us.

We were beaten and arrested despite of our non-violent stance. For those who died, there were still no sign of investigation and the authorities continue to harass us. This situation is saddening and simply unjust.

As for who might have been the attackers, whilst I was being beaten, my assailant was continuously saying, "We are the ones who build the roads and bridges. You travelling on this road and don't show gratitude. Those who are against force should suffer. Those who fight against force, you better suffered." I am not sure as to whether USDA was involved, but he referred as the force.