

## Regional Emergency



# PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK

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## CRISIS IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES Displaced families, traumatized children and hatred: **THE PRICE TO PAY FOR PEACE AND ORDER?**

"I am saddened by the displacement of peaceful families from their area, but sometimes this is the price we have to pay for long-term peace and order." Philippine media sources quoted President

Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as saying after another wave of displacement had erupted in the southern island of Mindanao. Thousands of residents from the island's central region have fled their homes due to renewed fighting between government and rebel forces. Social welfare officials place the number of displaced at more than 141,000. Most of them are living under cramped conditions in makeshift shelters and evacuation centers throughout four provinces affected by the military campaign. On February 11, 2003, the military launched its latest offensive against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) with the pretense of quashing lawless elements believed to be under the wing of the MILF. Four days later, newspapers report that government troops had captured the MILF stronghold in the Buliok Complex.

The price for the long-term solution in Mindanao sought by two successive administrations through the use of military force includes the case of a traumatized 11-year old boy. He had developed a speech impediment and resorted to eating soil since May 2000 when a bomb exploded near his boat during an aerial attack. The price referred to by President Macapagal-Arroyo includes the breeding of hatred between young, impressionable Christian and Moslem minds. After being asked whether he would treat a Moslem if he ever became a doctor, a Christian pupil expressed hatred, saying that he would even kill him. In response to the same question, a Moslem pupil faced his Christian classmate and said "Never. I will also

kill you!" These cases of traumatized and unfortunate children are among those reported by the Balik Kalipay Program, one of the projects of the Psychosocial Trauma Program of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP-CIDS PST). Balik Kalipay (Return to Happiness) Program has been documenting the effects of psychosocial trauma among villagers, who have suffered much after decades of armed conflict. Dr. June Pagaduan Lopez, head of the project supported by the Danish government, the British relief agency Oxfam, and a local aid group composed of businessmen, said that the "displacement and disruption" have gravely affected the mental well-being of the villagers, especially children caught in the crossfire.

"When lives and properties are lost in wars, they are irretrievable. What should not be lost is the sense of hope that survivors, especially children, must have if they are to go on," said Lopez. Meanwhile, Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman said that social workers and counselors are conducting play therapy for children in evacuation centers. "The main goal is to ensure that

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Crisis in the Southern Philippines... (continued from page 1)



the trauma of armed conflict, which essentially stole their childhood, is explained and that they can regain their childhood," she said.

Still unable to recover from a destructive secessionist war that erupted in the early 1970s, many areas in Central Mindanao became the scene of tense fighting between the

government and MILF rebels in 1997, 2000, and 2001. During the "all-out war" waged by then-President Joseph Estrada in 2000, tens of thousands of refugees swamped the town center of Pikit, North Cotabato province. The situation created nearly impossible demands for food and sanitation. A statement by the grassroots umbrella Mindanao Peoples Caucus reads: "That nightmare is back in Pikit nearly two years later." Strongly calling upon the government and the MILF to stop the war, the MPC reminded both parties "that the biggest victims in the 2000 war were not your combatants but the civilians who lost family members, farm animals and crops, houses and properties, the innocence of our children and the trust between the tri-peoples of Mindanao."



Municipal Disaster Operation Center in Pikit, Cotabato

Children and young people are the first to suffer in armed conflict situations. An television coverage of the plight of the displaced people in Pikit showed a teen-age Maguindanao girl who said that she had grown accustomed to evacuating her village and

living for months in the crowded evacuation centers. After recalling how her family evacuated their home during military offensives against the MILF in 2000 and 2001, she expressed wishes that her younger siblings did not have to witness war. She wished that they did not have to withstand hardships like she had while living in the centers. While being interviewed, she was carrying her younger brother on her lap. Both were seated just outside their tent-like sleeping area that offered little privacy and comfort for her family. The children documented by the Balik Kalipay Program and the media, are paying a heavy price in the government's latest offensive against the MILF to achieve the elusive dream of lasting peace and order in Mindanao. Suffering from what Lopez called the "invisible wounds of the war," they, their

families, relatives, and members of their communities are suffering from deep emotional scars – the legacy of violence that will remain even after the last bullet had been fired. (MPP) ■

References: "War in southern Philippines leaves long-lasting emotional scars" 02.19.03 Oliver Teves,

AP ([http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ap/20030219/ap\\_wo\\_en\\_ge/as\\_gen\\_phil...](http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ap/20030219/ap_wo_en_ge/as_gen_phil...)), the ABS-CBN news coverage of the war in Mindanao aired 02.25.03, and the "MPC Statement on the Pikit Crisis" issued 02.10.03 Mindanao Peoples Caucus (<http://iidnet.org/adv/mda/pikit-crisis.htm>).

## MINDANAO WAR AND THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS: Filipino youth sues for peace

"We regret that while the world – and our leaders in Manila – are focused on the impending war in the Middle East, war has again virtually broken out in our beloved Mindanao," reads the statement by the grassroots organization Mindanao Peoples Caucus urging the Philippine government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to end the war raging in the Central Mindanao region. The conflict came at the time when the world faces the threat of a global war as a result of the tension between Iraq and the United States. Ironically, the war erupted in the town of Pikit in North Cotabato province a couple of weeks before the "National Peace Consciousness Week" celebrations. On February 28, in a show of force, thousands of young people mainly students from universities throughout the metropolis joined peace activists and religious leaders in an anti-war protest in Manila's largest park. In skit, dance,

song, and sheer number, they sent a clear message to Presidents Bush and Macapagal-Arroyo – a resounding "NO" to the war in Iraq and an end to the war in Mindanao.

Part of an agreement between Manila and Washington in the US war against terror, the Bush administration deployed troops in the southern Philippine island of Basilan for a period of training and joint military exercises in 2002. The Philippine government meanwhile stepped up efforts against insurgents including the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), which has holed up in the jungles of Basilan. Human rights groups accused the military of arbitrarily detaining people, including minors, suspected of membership to the ASG. In 2003, there is the

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## SPECIAL FEATURE

### DR. MARGRET RUEFFLER and the PSYCHOLOGY of NATIONS

During her several years of practice in multicultural Manhattan, a German-American psychotherapist born after World War II by the name of Dr. Margret Rueffler earned valuable deep insights into the psyches of clients of various nationalities including Jews and people of European descent, including the children of Holocaust survivors. In one of her therapy sessions, she came in touch with her "theretofore unconscious German national heritage" of World War II and the Holocaust through a young Jewish man whose father came from Germany. "Exploring this," Dr. Rueffler said, "I found that my personal German heritage moved me deeply. For several years I struggled to accept my previously unacknowledged and unknown guilt and embarrassment of being German." According to Dr. Rueffler, the recognition and personal experience of that inherited psychological pattern allowed her to "understand the influence of collective patterns and traumata on the individual as well as the reciprocal influence each individual asserts, via thoughts and actions, on the collective," with the influence being either positive or negative.

The awareness and recognition of deep wounds in the soul of a nation as a result of the trauma of war gave the German-American transpersonal psychologist the opportunity to view the behavior of a nation from a different perspective. Her profession allowed her to research and to explore behavioral and international patterns, prevention and the healing of national traumata, and to understand national collective processes. From these, came her "The Psychology of Nations," which she described as a holistic model that views the individual as an intricate part of a national collective.



As a wider framework for multiple applications, she explains that "The Psychology of Nations" is "based on the inner attitude of honoring the 'Self' with its inherent developmental and evolutionary potential as the center and depth of an individual as well as of nations." This allows the healthy integration of individuals into their respective nations. She says that this inner awareness can and inevitably transform deeply rooted national patterns, leading to changes in the quality of life for both the individual and the collective. "A nation's psychological heritage, individual as well as collective, is lived and expressed in the nation's current concerns, activities, and choices," says Dr. Rueffler. She maintains that an understanding of the interconnection between the individual and the collective and the power of individuals to influence the latter are basic to the transformation of the unconscious of the national collective. "This very understanding," she explains, "brings with it an appreciation of the importance of individual choice and the assessment of the laws and principles that govern a nation's development."

Dr. Rueffler says that "The Psychology of Nations" researches the national psyche as a living system, its development, psychopolitical history, collective traumata and national consciousness as a whole. It emphasizes the prevention of violence, assessment of multi-ethnic tensions, their mechanisms and manner of development. Her PsychoPolitical Peace Institute and Foundation, which works internationally in community training for positive transformation in pre-crisis cultures and areas of tension, conducts seminars that familiarize participants with the values of compassion, empowerment, choice and self-help – the four values psychological principles outlined by "The Psychology of Nations". In cooperation with individuals and with sponsoring organizations, the PsychoPolitical Peace Institute and Foundation has been conducting projects working in location with multi-ethnic groups for the prevention and treatment of violence and collective traumata based on these four values. It has held projects in the Republic of Georgia and in Indonesia. Dr. Rueffler, who has published several books in different languages, is currently working in Bali, Indonesia to support the local people in the aftermath of the October 12 bombing in the tourist district of Kuta. (MPP) ■

References: The Psychology of Nations handout given during a forum held on February 10, 2003 in Quezon City, Philippines and conducted in cooperation with the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP-CIDS) and Center for Health and Creative Arts (CHACRA). For more information about the seminars under "The Psychology of Nations" approach and the PsychoPolitical Peace Foundation, please visit the webpage: <http://www.pppi.net> or send an e-mail to [found@pppi.net](mailto:found@pppi.net).

Unwilling pawns in a hidden,  
 ugly, and outrageous war

## BURMA:

### One of the world's worst places for boys

Burma enjoys the hideous distinction of having the largest number of child soldiers on the planet. Although the military and opposition groups of this Southeast Asian country are excluded from the infamous list of 20 state and non-state actors annexed to the UN Secretary General's report on child soldiers, with twenty percent or more of its estimated 350,000 soldiers may be under-18s, the Burmese army has been known to forcibly recruit children as young as eleven. Opposition groups operating in the country like the United Wa State Army, Shan State Army (South), Karen National Liberation Army, and the Karenni Army have also been known to recruit children as soldiers. Human Rights Watch estimates the number of child soldiers in Burma to be as high as 70,000. Although party to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, Burma has yet to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol. "Burma has a poor human rights record, but its record on child soldiers is the worst in the world," says the Children's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch.

The country is undoubtedly one of the world's worst places for children, boys in particular. "To be a boy in Burma today means facing the constant risk of being picked up off the street, forced to commit atrocities against villagers, and never seeing your family again," said Jo Becker of the Children's Rights Division. Frequenting public places and with their services reportedly paid in cash or rice, recruiters for the armed forces often forcibly take boys and send them to camps for training. With no hope to contact their families, many of the recruits face torture and even death if they dared to run away. Testimonies of former child soldiers contained in the Human Rights Watch report "My Gun Was as Tall as Me" attest to the severe hardships and human rights abuses that surround the lives of the children recruited by the state and non-state players in Burma. Based on interviews with more than 36 former and current child soldiers, the report, released in October last year, attests to the totally unacceptable situation in Burma.

One of the Burmese boys recalled how he and around 60 other young recruits were stripped naked and herded in a tiny room and subjected to routine beating and inhuman living conditions. Ten of the children were only 13 years old. Another child recruited by one of the armed groups recalled his experiences in the battlefield where he saw three of his companions killed. Under international laws, the recruitment of children into the national armies or armed forces is recognized as a war crime. Condemned

#### NEWS DISPATCH... (continued from page 5)

Migration from July 7 to 25, 2003. The course aims to provide those who work with refugees and other forced migrants with a better understanding of the forces and institutions that dominate their world and the world of those who have been uprooted. The nearly a course offers insights into the different views on the nature of forced migration, the historical context of forced migration and its location within broader regional and global processes, and the multi-faceted realities faced by forced migrants themselves and how these are represented. It will also discuss contemporary responses to migration at institutional and ground levels. Closing date for applications is 1 May 2003, with reservation on a first-come, first-served basis. (MPP) ■

References: <http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/indexrsp.html>  
**For more information about the International Summer School in Forced Migration and the Refugee Studies Center, visit:**  
<http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/indexrsp.html>

to be one of the worst forms of child labor, the recruitment of under-18s into the Burmese armed forces and the 19 multi-ethnic opposition groups remains unabated. The international community and human rights groups such as the Human Rights Watch have repeatedly issued calls upon Rangoon and the armed opposition groups for an immediate end to the recruitment of children into their ranks and demobilization. The Burmese government has meanwhile persistently denied the forcible recruitment and use of child soldiers. It has dismissed the alarming report issued by the Human Rights Watch, referring to the findings as "preposterous," "unsubstantiated," and "malicious." Nonetheless, the child recruits of Burma are still being subjected to the deplorable conditions and are forced to commit atrocities against civilians. The young children of Burma are the unwilling pawns in a hidden, very ugly, and outrageous war in a beautiful but impoverished land ruled by a cold, ruthless and iron-fisted military dictatorship. (MPP) ■

#### See Typescript for a description about the report.

Reference: "Burma: World's Highest Number of Child Soldiers, New Report Details Widespread Forced Recruitment" 10.16.02 ([www.yahoo.com/news](http://www.yahoo.com/news)) and an e-mail by Jo Becker of Human Rights Watch updating the situation in Burma dated 11.27.02. The report "My Gun Was as Tall as Me" is online at <http://hrw.org/reports/2002/burma/>. Additional campaign materials against the use of child soldiers in Burma can be found at <http://hrw.org/campaigns/crp/burma/index.htm>. **Please support the international campaign against the recruitment and use of child soldiers.**

## NEWS DISPATCH

### Latest victims of the conflict in Indonesia's Aceh province Three schoolchildren killed in explosion

An Indonesian military spokesman reported that three school children were killed in an explosion on February 21, 2003 in the remote village in North Aceh. The latest child victims in the 27-year conflict between government troops and forces belonging to the Free Aceh Movement, the three boys were on their way to watch a volleyball game. The three schoolboys, aged between 16 and 18 years old, had stopped to rest on top of three pipe bombs that have been placed in the area for over a month. The Indonesia military official meanwhile suspected that the three victims were members of the Free Aceh Movement. A rebel spokesman has meanwhile denied the allegation. The explosion comes after peace monitors in Aceh reported that both the Indonesian military and Aceh separatist were guilty of violating a peace accord signed in December. According to the Henri Dunant Center, government troops were behind two killings and a shooting in January, while Free Aceh Movement guerrillas were responsible for an attack in December. The Free Aceh Movement launched a separatist campaign in 1976 and in the past decade alone, about 12,000 people have been killed in the periodic eruptions of violence in the oil-and-gas rich region, located on the northwestern tip of Sumatra. (MPP)

Reference: "Explosion kills three schoolboys in Indonesia's Aceh" 02.21.03 AP ([http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ap/20030222/ap\\_wo\\_en\\_po/as\\_gen\\_ind](http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ap/20030222/ap_wo_en_po/as_gen_ind) .)

### Amid appeal for the rescue of child soldiers Military admits difficulty in sparing child combatants, Rebel chief calls followers to "fight till death"

A top-level military official told a leading Philippine newspaper that it would be difficult to spare, much less rescue, children involved in the fighting that has erupted between government troops and forces of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in the southern island of Mindanao. Armed Forces of the Philippines Southern Command chief Lt. Gen. Narciso Abaya told the Inquirer that some of the MILF rebels killed in an encounter in the town of Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat province were minors. "You know fire-fights usually happen, sometimes you don't even see the faces of your enemy," he said. Abaya added that the most the military could do was turn over captured children to the Department of

Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the government agency tasked to take custody of captured child combatants.

Meanwhile, a week after the encounter, MILF Chair Hashim Salamat, in a taped radio message told followers with firearms to fight to the end. "We are pushed to the wall, we have to fight back," said Salamat. "All who have firearms must fight till death." Despite a previous pronouncement by the MILF that it was not enlisting individuals below-18 year old into their ranks, there have been many reports that the secessionist group was training young combatants. These included young girls. After running over the MILF stronghold in Pikit, North Cotabato, government troops found photographs of children in uniform and brandishing guns. The MILF leader's appeal throws further doubts on the fate of the child combatants in Central Mindanao.

Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman urged the military to rescue child soldiers of the MILF instead of engaging them in battle. She told them to undertake rescue operations to take children out of the situation. She also appealed to the MILF to stop using children in the war that has displaced thousands of agriculturist families in Central Mindanao. Soliman said that she would raise the issue of child soldiers with the government and the MILF in the peace negotiations. The DSWD secretary also said that she would lead the filing of cases against the MILF if it were found that the group was using child combatants. The raging conflict in Central Mindanao is a test to the Philippines' adherence to and the implementation of national and international instruments for the release or rescue, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers. This includes the adherence to the Optional Protocol, ratified by Philippine Senate in April 2003, as well as the faithful implementation of an inter-agency Memorandum of Agreement signed in March 2000 between the military, police, and other government agencies including the DSWD for the handling and treatment of child soldiers. (MPP)

References: "Military urged to rescue child soldiers" 02.18.03 ([http://www.inq7.net/nat/2003/feb/18/nat\\_6-1.htm](http://www.inq7.net/nat/2003/feb/18/nat_6-1.htm)) and "MILF Chair: 'All with firearms must fight till death'" 02.25.03 Inquirer News Service ([http://www.inq7.net/nat/2003/feb/26/nat\\_4-1.htm](http://www.inq7.net/nat/2003/feb/26/nat_4-1.htm))

### Terrorist group owns attack, apologizes to victims 10 mo. old baby, 10-year old girl among killed in airport bomb blast in southern Philippines

Apologies are never enough, especially when children and innocent civilians are killed in a bomb attack. One of the leaders of a faction of the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)

## North Korean refugees in

# CHINA

Between a hungry homeland or an unsure future across the border

Two years ago, a gaunt 60-year old North Korean woman risked her life to cross a frozen river in the forbidding mountains into China, only to die in the relentless cold. A Chinese professor who authored a paper on North Koreans fleeing worsening food shortages and repression in the Stalinist regime said that the woman wore clothing that gave her little protection from the cold. She was one of the thousands of subjects of the Hermit Kingdom who risked crossing the unforgiving border to China. Two years ago, aid workers estimated that some 200,000 North Koreans had illegally migrated to northern China but Beijing has imposed stricter measures to prevent their neighbors from the peninsula from entering its borders. That number is estimated to have dwindled to 20,000. In January, Chinese police arrested almost 50 North Koreans attempting to flee to South Korea and Japan by boat in the port city of Yantai. They have also arrested two South Koreans on suspicions of organized smuggling. Worries over the alleged existence of weapons of mass destruction in North Korea have overshadowed the plight of North Korean refugees in China.

For many North Koreans hiding in China, the price of getting caught either by the Chinese authorities or underground North Korean operatives means certain deportation. International human rights watchdogs condemned Beijing's moves to crackdown on North Korean migrants. They said that the North Koreans deserved special protection under international treaties such as the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees. China meanwhile insists that these North Koreans are illegal aliens. Western and local thinkers believe that the measures being undertaken by Beijing stem from worries of a mass exodus of North Koreans into country in the event of the disintegration of the Pyongyang government. Despite the risks involved in crossing the border and facing an unsure fate in China, asylum seekers to South Korea still prefer their larger neighbor to the north as their route. The snow-capped mountains and the Chinese and North Korean border troops of the north appear to be a better option than the heavily militarized border to the south. In the last

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### Mindanao War and the Middle East Crisis... (continued from page 2)

planned development of US troops to another ASG sanctuary, the Sulu Archipelago, particularly on the island of Jolo. On the same day of the large peace rally in Manila, young people in the main town of Jolo demonstrated against the planned deployment of American troops into their island. They held up placards bearing the names of frightful and bloody battles waged by the American colonial forces against their forebears during the first decade of the 1900s. Joining hands with adults, they expressed fears that a US troop deployment in Jolo would spark old but bitter memories among the natives. Although they were not even born during the US colonial military campaigns to quell all local opposition to foreign rule, the people still had painful collective memories of a protracted war that began in the 1970s between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and Manila.

On March 6, the Balik Kalipay Program, which has been doing trauma-healing activities for the war victims of Central Mindanao, spearheaded a different kind of protest action in Pikit. In a psychosocial workshop, children-evacuees were given materials and taught how to fly a kite for peace. Organizers of the "Fly a Kite for Peace" hoped that all communities of Mindanao would eventually join them in their form of protest that "even the fighter-pilots and the warring men on the field" will see the kites begging for peace. The protest actions in Manila, Jolo and Pikit demonstrated the Filipino children and youth's strong rejection of war and clamor for peace. More than just protest actions, they were reminders that the children and young people have a right to be heard and a right to determine their future. Through peaceful marches, songs, skits, dances, and the flying of colorful kites, the children and youth sent a compelling message to Bush, Macapagal-Arroyo, and government troops and rebels in Mindanao: No one really stands to gain anything in war. (MPP) ■

References: "MPC Statement on the Pikit Crisis" issued 02.10.03 Mindanao Peoples Caucus (<http://iidnet.org/adv/mda/pikit-crisis.htm>) "Kite for Peace in Mindanao" 03.05.03 Romy Elsufa TODAY ABS-CBN.com ([http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/abs\\_news\\_body.asp?section=Provincial&oid=17395](http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/abs_news_body.asp?section=Provincial&oid=17395))

### NEWS DISPATCH... (continued from page 3)

leader claimed responsibility for the March 5, 2003 bombing of the international airport in the southern Philippine city of Davao. Hamsiraji Sali even issued an apology to the victims of the blast, which had claimed 21 lives and injured 134 others. Sali explained that an ASG operative had failed to enter the airport and placed the bomb at a crowded waiting area. The injured included an undetermined number of children. Survivors of the blast and medical personnel rushing to the scene described the as "flooded with blood." Media sources also reported that the injured included three Americans, one of them a 10-month old baby. Military authorities meanwhile doubted the claims issued by the ASG and tagged the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) as the real culprits of the callous and cowardly attack, the latest and the worst in a series of explosions to hit the island of Mindanao in recent months. The attack comes after a lull in the fighting between government troops and the MILF, which has denied responsibility for the attack. (MPP)

References: "Abus own Davao blast but gov't tags MILF" 03.06.03 Inquirer News Service (<http://www.inq7.net/>) "Blood flowed; kids screamed" 03.06.03 Inquirer Mindanao Bureau ([http://www.inq7.net/nat/2003/mar/06/nat\\_3-1.htm](http://www.inq7.net/nat/2003/mar/06/nat_3-1.htm))

### Refugee Studies Centre International Summer School in Forced Migration set for July 2003

The Refugee Studies Centre (RSC) at Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford in England announces the holding of the International Summer School in Forced

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### North Korean Refugees... (continued from page 4)

few years, newspapers have publicized the daring and successful attempts of North Koreans to reach asylum by making it into foreign embassies and diplomatic missions in Beijing. These have caused humiliation and repercussions in China.

On February 18, human rights activists and families picketed outside the Chinese embassy in Seoul and demanded for the release of South Koreans arrested in China for assisting North Korean refugees. They also urged Beijing to free unsuccessful asylum-seeking northerners and to stop their

## typescript

Annotated bibliographies of recent and not-so-recent publications, studies, reports and other documents on psychosocial trauma, child soldiers, IDPs, and related issues. Please visit [www.psychosocialnetwork.org/online\\_resources.htm](http://www.psychosocialnetwork.org/online_resources.htm). Works featured in this section are available for reference use at the PST Library.

## My Gun Was As Tall As Me CHILD SOLDIERS in BURMA

Human Rights Watch  
 October 2002 (United States)  
 ISBN: 1-56432-279-3  
 E-mail: [nrwnyc@hrw.org](mailto:nrwnyc@hrw.org)



The 220-page report by Human Rights Watch presents the most comprehensive study of child soldiers in Burma to date. Drawing on interviews with more than three dozen current and former child soldiers, the report examines child recruitment by nineteen different armed opposition groups in addition to the government army. Exposing the experiences of the boys from the moment they were recruited by the state and non-state armies to their training in camps and moments in the battlefield, the book exposes the disturbing reality of a wide scale forcible recruitment and use of children as soldiers in Burma. The credibility of the report is beefed up by the reaction by the Burmese government, which immediately dismissed the work as "preposterous," "unsubstantiated," and "malicious." The report is available on-line at <http://hrw.org/reports/2002/burma/>. (MPP) ■

forcible repatriation to the arms of Pyongyang. Human rights activists have also criticized Seoul for making little action to absorb North Korean asylum seekers in China. The head of the coalition that organized the rallies said that they were urging the South Korean government to elevate the refugee issue as a formal diplomatic agenda pushing for a definitive solution. Meanwhile, North Koreans in China, after escaping the harsh conditions in their country, have found themselves in an even harder predicament in their only way to freedom. They escaped the jaws of hunger and repression only to find themselves in the arms of fear and great uncertainty. (MPP) ■