



The Burmese government must immediately end human rights violations, including violence against women, in Palaung areas

6th May 2013

During the past four months, the Burmese Army has been carrying out fierce military offensives in Palaung areas against the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N), Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA). The Palaung Women's Organization and Ta'ang Students and Youth Organization (TSYO) are gravely concerned at the impacts of the fighting on local communities, who have suffered widespread abuses by the Burmese military.

Women have been raped, and young girls forced at gunpoint to guide and porter for Burmese troops. Villagers have been killed by landmines while tied up and forced to work as porters.

Thousands of people in Palaung areas have fled their homes due to attacks and human rights abuses since the renewed fighting against the KIA, TNLA and SSA-N in 2011. Over 2,000 in Mantong and Namkham, and 2,000 in Kutkhai have become internally displaced person in Mantong, Namkham and Kutkhai, and over 1,500 have been displaced in Tangyan.

Most recently, two women from Yay Pone village, Mantong Township, Northern Shan State, were raped by Burmese soldiers from LIB 502 on April 19th and 20th, 2013.

A villager from Yay Pone said: "It is very difficult for the victims to speak out about rape. They were threatened by the soldiers not to tell anyone, so the rest of the community is scared. It is very dangerous for us to speak out."

Even though the Burmese government led by Thein Sein has been holding peace negotiations and signed ceasefire agreements with various ethnic armed groups, their troops are still carrying out military offensives, and committing widespread human rights violations in ethnic areas. The government's peace initiatives thus appear to be just a public relations exercise in preparation for the chairmanship of ASEAN in 2014, and the upcoming 2015 elections. They are not sincere about seeking a political solution to the conflict.

PWO is very concerned for the security and lives of Palaung women, who are being threatened by the ongoing violence and military build-up in their areas. PWO strongly urges the Thein Sein government to stop all kinds of violence against women, stop all military offensives, and put an end to Burma Army impunity for crimes in ethnic areas.

PWO urges the Burmese government:

1. To stop increasing the number of Burma Army troops in ethnic areas, withdraw all troops from these areas, and stop all military offensives.
2. To immediately stop rape, torture, all kinds of violence against women and other serious human right violations by Burma Army troops.
3. To authorize the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission to investigate the human rights violations, including sexual violence, by Burma Army troops.
4. To take responsibility to ensure that Burma Army troops who have committed sexual violence and other serious crimes in ethnic areas are brought to justice.
5. To allow humanitarian agencies to freely access and assist the IDPs until it is safe for them to return home voluntarily.

Palaung Women's Organization (PWO) and Ta'ang Student and Youth Organization (TSYO)

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