

May 22, 2013

Press release by Shan community based organisations

### **Thein Sein and China must stop pipeline project to prevent escalation of conflict in northern Shan State**

Shan community based groups warn that recent Burmese government army attacks in northern Shan State, causing displacement of over 3,000 villagers, are directly linked to China's oil and gas pipelines, and urge Burmese President Thein Sein and China to stop the project immediately before violence escalates even further.

On May 9, Burmese troops launched a fierce artillery assault on a Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) base only one kilometer from where the pipelines cross into China, causing over 3,000 people from 32 villages to flee their homes. About 2,000 crossed into China, and 1,000 fled to the town of Namkham.

Over 100 mortar shells were fired by Burmese troops right across the pipelines, from south of the Mao (Shweli) River towards the village of Nawng Ma Tar, near the SSA-S base. On May 13, two civilians were killed and three injured, including a woman, when an unidentified armed group began shooting at a pipeline vehicle depot south of Namkham. There are several resistance armies active along the pipeline in this area, as well as various pro-government militias.

The latest attacks, launched before gas is due to start flowing next month, could derail the fragile peace negotiations between the Burmese government and the SSA-S, one of the largest resistance groups in Shan State.

"Villagers feared more Burma Army attacks and abuses along the pipelines, and that is exactly what is happening," said Sai Khur Hseng of Shan Sapawa Environmental Organisation. "Thein Sein and his Chinese business partners should immediately stop this pipeline project before the violence and suffering spreads even further."

Many displaced villagers are still too afraid to return to their homes, as the Burma Army continues to sweep through villages on the Shan-China border to drive out resistance forces. A displaced villager was beaten to death by Burmese troops on May 10.

Shan community groups have been calling for a moratorium on large scale development projects in Shan State until there is a negotiated resolution to the political issues at the root of the decades-long conflict.

Shan community groups include: Shan Human Rights Foundation, Shan Sapawa Environmental Organisation, Shan State Development Foundation, Shan State Organisation, Shan Women's Action Network, Shan Youth Network Group, Shan Youth Power

*A map and summary by the Shan Human Rights Foundation of the recent Burma Army attacks and displacement near Namkham can be viewed on [www.shanhumanrights.org](http://www.shanhumanrights.org)*

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