



Statement by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

March 28, 2014

Spreading Burma Army attacks and abuses against civilians in Shan State undermine nationwide ceasefire negotiations

The Shan Human Rights Foundation is deeply concerned at the escalation of attacks and abuses by the Burma Army against civilians in different areas of Shan State during March 2014, which are undermining current negotiations for a nationwide ceasefire.

Unlawful attacks and abuses have been documented recently in three townships, Nawng Khio and Kyaukme in northern Shan State, and Murngton in eastern Shan State. Troops from six Burma Army battalions have fired mortar shells at villages, arrested and tortured villagers, and looted villagers' property and livestock

In each incident, the Burmese troops were targeting civilians during military operations against Shan armed forces, the Shan State Army – North (SSA-North) and the Shan State Army – South (SSA-South), both of which have ceasefire agreements with the Burmese government and are involved in current negotiations for a nationwide ceasefire accord.

During March 1-2, 2014, as reported by SHRF, Burmese government troops from three battalions, Hsipaw based 502, Bago Division based 77, and Nawng Khio based 115, fired shells and sprayed gunfire without warning into villages in Nawng Khio township, severely tortured a villager, questioned the villagers at gunpoint, and looted livestock; causing about 2,000 villagers from eleven villages to flee their homes.

Similarly, on 22nd of March, 2014 as reported by the Shan Herald Agency for News (SHAN), around 200 troops from the same Battalion 77 which had attacked villages in Nong Khio earlier in the month, and Battalion 503 attacked and fired shells into Ngar Jarng village, 20 miles from Kyawkme township, northern Shan State. The Burmese troops also arrested, interrogated, and tortured six villagers, including one woman, suspected of associating with SSA-N. It was also reported that the Burma Army has reinforced its troops in the area to at least 500 soldiers.

Additionally, as reported on 26th March by the Shan Herald Agency for News and Tai Freedom news, on 23rd March 2014, Burmese soldiers from Infantry Battalions 519 and 53 looted villagers' property and livestock after fighting with the SSA-South in Banggeng village, 10 kilometers east of Murngton township, Eastern Shan State. According to the report, "the Burmese troops entered into all houses of the villagers and threatened villagers with their weapons. Some troops gathered all villagers at the center of the village and many of them searched the houses of villagers and took the materials and properties owned by villagers as they wanted."

It is unacceptable that Burmese government troops are stepping up these kinds of unlawful attacks and abuses precisely while the government is negotiating with ethnic leaders for a nationwide ceasefire agreement. This is directly destroying trust in the peace process, and undermining chances of establishing peace.

These recent incidents conform to the pattern of abuses committed by the Burmese military against civilian populations for decades, as highlighted by a report by Harvard University's International Human Rights Clinic launched on March 24 in Rangoon. The Clinic urged the military to end "indiscriminate attacks and wilful killings of civilians" and "to immediately renounce all counterinsurgency policies and practices that lead to the targeting of civilians."

We, the Shan Human Rights Foundation strongly urge Burmese government to immediately stop all unlawful attacks and abuses targeting innocent civilians, and to stop expanding military operations in ethnic areas, especially during this time while nationwide ceasefire negotiations are underway.