

Date: August 17, 2016

Open letter from 26 Shan community groups to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to cancel Salween dams

To:

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,

State Counsellor and Foreign Minister,

We are writing to express our great concern at your government's announcement on August 12 that you will proceed with hydropower dams on the Salween river, as the best option to meet Burma's energy needs.

The Salween is a vital artery for millions of ethnic people in eastern Burma, Thailand and China, who will be irreparably impacted by blockage of its mighty flow. There has been consistent opposition to the Salween dams by communities in Shan, Karenni, Karen and Mon States, as well as other parts of Burma and neighbouring countries.

We wish to remind you that the Salween river basin has been a conflict area for decades, where the Burma Army has been relentlessly expanding and committing systematic atrocities against villagers in its attempts to control ethnic lands and resources. Pushing ahead with these unpopular dams will inevitably lead to more Burma Army militarization, increased conflict, and ongoing atrocities.

The unilateral decision to go ahead with the Salween dams before political dialogue about federalism has even begun, is depriving ethnic communities of their right to decide about natural resources in their areas, and indicates a lack of sincerity towards the peace process. Coming only weeks before the planned "21st Century Panglong Conference," this green light to the Salween dams is highly worrying.

We also wish to point out that most of the energy produced by the Salween dams will be exported to neighbouring countries. It is thus false to claim that the dams must be built to address Burma's power needs. For example, about 90% of the power produced by the 1,400 megawatt Kunlong dam and 1,200 megawatt Naung Pha dam on the Salween in northern Shan State will go to China, while ethnic peoples in Burma will bear the terrible costs.

In the interests of ethnic reconciliation and environmental sustainability, we therefore strongly urge you to immediately cancel the Salween dams. Only federal policies granting equal rights to the ethnic peoples will end the civil war in Burma, a goal which our neighbouring countries will also wholeheartedly support.

Yours sincerely,

1. Action for Shan State Rivers
2. Shan State Farmers' Network
3. Shan Farmers' Network
4. Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization

5. Shan Human Rights Foundation
6. Shan Women's Action Network
7. Shan Students Union-Thailand
8. Shan Youth Power
9. Shan Youth Organization (Taunggyi)
10. Shan Youth Network Group
11. Kaw Dai
12. Workers' Solidarity Association
13. Zao Khur Tai
14. Nong Zarng Customary Land Committee
15. Toom Toan Tai
16. Shan Relief and Development Committee
17. Community Action for Development Education (Shan State)
18. Mong Pan Youth Committee
19. Koong Jor Refugee Camp Committee
20. Wan Paing Fah IDPs Camp Committee
21. Laikha Youth Association
22. Capacity Building for Youth (Laikha)
23. Shan State Women's Organisation
24. Shan State Youth Network Committee
25. Tai Literature and Culture Association (KarLi)
26. Tai Youth Organization (Karli)

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