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Update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

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Burma Army troops step up military operations, force villagers to be porters and lay landmines in ceasefire area of eastern Shan State

During December 2017, despite an existing ceasefire, the Burma Army has stepped up operations against the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA) in Mong Paeng township, eastern Shan State. This led to an armed clash on December 4, after which about 100 Burma Army troops of LIB 519 and IB 278 forced civilians from three villages to guide and porter for them. On December 12, terrified inhabitants of one village tried to flee to other villages, but were ordered back by Burmese troops of LIB 278, after which land mines have been laid around the village, preventing locals from going to their farms.

Details of the violations are as follows:

Seven villagers from three villages forced to guide and porter for 100 Burma Army troops from LIB 519 and IB 278

On November 29, 2017, after a meeting of local administrative officers about village tract administrator elections in Mong Paeng, they were summoned by the Burma Army commander of Infantry Battalion (IB) 43 (under the Kengtung based Triangle Regional Command) for a meeting at the IB 43 military base. The commander told them that all village tract administrators had to report to the Burma Army about the movement of Shan troops in their villages.

On December 4, 2017, at 2:30 pm, fighting broke out between a patrol of about 50 Burma Army troops of LIB 519, based in Mong Ton, and RCSS/SSA troops about half a mile north of Wan Huay Nort, Mong Pu Awn village tract, Mong Paeng Township. The fighting lasted for 30 minutes.

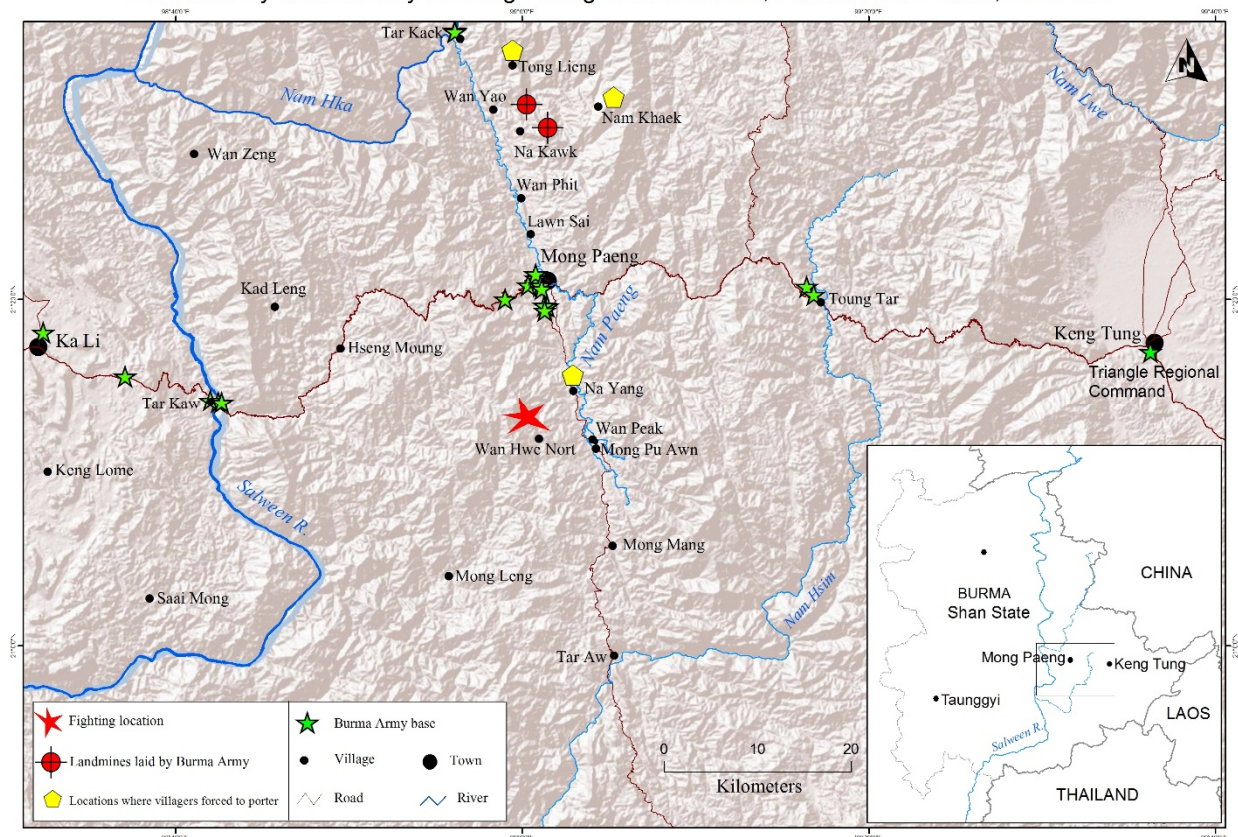
The next day, on December 5, the Burma Army troops ordered five villagers of Wan Huay Nort, to guide them and carry their supplies for about five miles to Wan Na Yang, in Yang Kham village tract, between Mong Paeng and Mong Pu Awn.

The five villagers were: Lung Narm Hseng aged 48, Lung Kham Heng aged 55, Lung Phoam Ma aged 45, Lung Kyaung Ngurn aged 47, and Ai Gam aged 45. Ai Gam and Lung Kyaung Ngurn had to carry supplies of the Burmese soldiers. Wan Huay Nort is a Palaung village of about 30 households with over hundred inhabitants.

Also on December 5, about 50 Burmese troops from IB 278, based in Mong Hsat, ordered a 40-year-old villager called Lung Nanda from Wan Na Kawk, Wan Tar Kaek tract, Mong Paeng township, to guide them and carry military supplies to the village of Tong Lieng in Wan Tar Khaek tract, a distance of about five miles. He had to carry supplies weighing about 16 kg. After reaching Tong Lieng, he was released.

On December 6, a 40-year-old villager called Lung Naw, from Wan Yao village, was ordered by the same troops from IB 278 to carry their military equipment from Wan Yao to Nam Khaek, Pang Wai tract, about ten miles east of Wan Yao. He had to stay with them a night there before being released.

Violations by Burma Army in Mong Paeng ceasefire area, Eastern Shan State, Dec 2017



Burma Army troops of IB 278 threaten villagers, block them from fleeing and lay landmines around their village

On December 12, 2017, about 50 troops from IB 278 came from the direction of Wan Na Kawk to Wan Yao. From about 4:30 to 5:30 am, they searched for Shan soldiers in every house. They found an old disused rifle in the house of Lung Ngern, the chairman of Wan Yao, and accused him of having been given it by RCSS. He explained that it was actually a rifle which had been issued by the Burma Army themselves to the local village militia.

The next morning, at around 8 am, the Burma Army troops summoned villagers to a meeting at Lung Ngern's house, ordering one villager from each house to attend.

At the meeting, the troops asked the villagers: "Have you seen any Shan soldiers? Where are they?" When the villagers replied that they hadn't seen any, and didn't know where they were, the Burmese soldiers brought out an old picture of a Shan army camp and showed it the villagers. The villagers said they didn't know the camp, and thought it must be far from their village. The Burmese commander then turned to Lung Ngern and said if the sound of gunfire was heard again near his village, he would be arrested.

On hearing this threat to Lung Ngern, villagers became very scared, and at about 1:30 pm, they began to flee with four cars towards Wan Phit village, about 7 miles to the south, and to Lawn Sai village, a further 3 miles beyond Wan Phit. Wan Yao has seventeen households with over 50 people.

At about 4 pm, seeing villagers had fled, the Burmese soldiers called two of the remaining villagers, Sai Waling and Sai Su Nanda, who were also preparing to flee, and asked them: "Who forced you to flee? Shan soldiers or us?" The villagers replied that nobody had forced them to flee, and they had decided to flee by themselves.

The Burmese soldiers then ordered all the villagers to come back. They said that if they saw any more cars transporting belongings out of the village, they would be seized and the villagers arrested. After that, the villagers returned to their village on that same day.

Since that day, the villagers of Wan Yao have seen Burmese troops laying landmines around their village. They have seen one landmine laid one mile east of their village, and twelve landmines east of Na Kawk. Fearing these landmines, villagers dare not go to their farm. They have asked for help to take out these landmines.

Burma Army deployment in Mong Paeng

There are ten Burma Army battalions active in Mong Paeng township: IB 43 (based in Mong Paeng), IB 246 (Kun Hing), IB 247 (Nam Sang), IB 277 (Mong Ton), IB 278 (Mong Hsat), LIB 333 (Mong Hsat), LIB 360 (Mong Paeng), LIB 519 (Mong Ton), LIB 527 (Mong Hsat), and LIB 528 (Mong Paeng).

In July 2017, SHRF documented arbitrary detention, torture and looting of local villagers in Mong Paeng by 277 and 527, as well as by local pro-government militia.

RCSS/SSA has signed state level and union level bilateral ceasefire agreements, and was one of eight groups which signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) under President Thein Sein's government on October 15, 2015. The Burma Army's provocative military operations and violations against local civilians are in direct violation of the NCA.

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