



## **Update by Shan Human Rights Foundation**

**May 11, 2015**

### **Killing, beheading and disappearance of villagers instill fear of return among Kokang refugees**

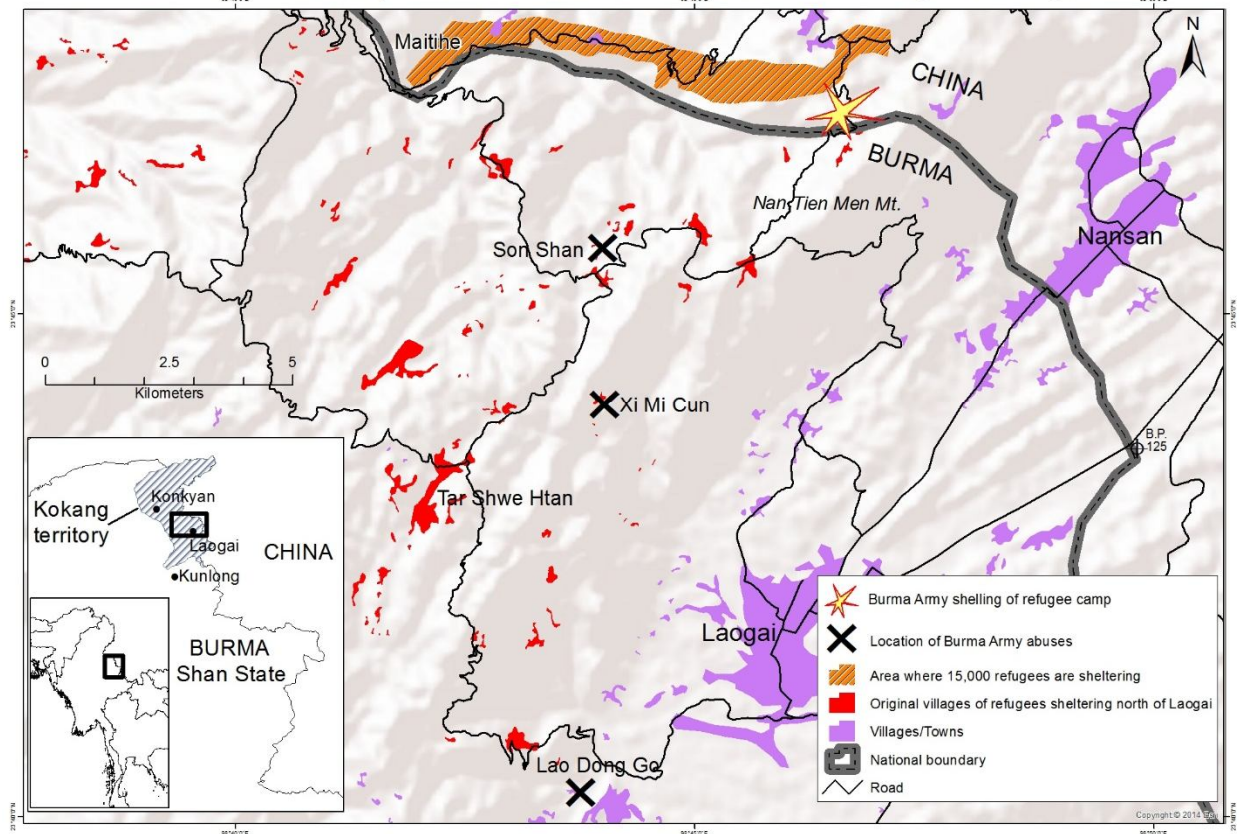
According to recent interviews by SHRF, Kokang refugees sheltering in China remain fearful of return, due to killing, beheading and disappearance of villagers caught returning home.

There are still tens of thousands of refugees sheltering along the length of the China-Kokang border, in formal camps set up by the Chinese authorities, as well as in unofficial makeshift camps. Refugees interviewed by SHRF were among about 15,000 refugees staying along a 10-km section of the border directly north of Laogai. They have fled from dozens of mountain villages where fighting continues between the Burma Army and the Kokang resistance army, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA).

Thousands of these refugees had since mid-February been staying in a large camp straddling the border at Maitihe, but on April 15, government authorities from Laogai arrived at the camp and told the IDPs on the Kokang side of the border that they were not allowed to stay there. They were ordered to return to IDP shelters set up in schools in Laogai and Konkyan, and were threatened that if they did not return within three days, they would be assumed to be MNDAA supporters, and would be killed. However, the IDPs were too afraid to return, and most moved to other nearby refugee settlements in China.

Only a few days after the order for the IDPs to return, the Burma Army launched a large-scale offensive against the MNDAA at Nan Tien Men mountain, using heavy artillery. Shells landing on the Chinese side of the border caused over 700 refugees sheltering at Chin Cai Go (the border crossing directly north of Nan Tien Men) to evacuate deeper into China.

Location of Burma Army abuses documented by SHRF in Kokang area, May 2015



Ongoing shelling in the Nan Tien Men area since early May is continuing to instill fear in the refugees. Most are too afraid to even cross back and make brief visits to their homes, due to cases of killing and disappearance of villagers returning across the border. Refugees said that most villages in their area are now completely deserted.

Refugees gave testimony about the following cases of civilian death or disappearance in their villages since conflict broke out in the Kokang area on February 9, 2015:

No.	Date	Location	Case summary
1	Feb 12, 2015	Xi Mi Cun village	An elderly villager shot dead in his home by Burma Army
2	Feb 14, 2015	Xi Mi Cun village	An elderly blind villager found burned to death in his home
3	Feb15-16, 2015	Lao Dong Go village	An elderly villager killed by Burma Army shell in his home
4	Mid-March, 2015	Xi Mi Cun village	Four refugees returned to their village: two dead bodies were found in the village, one beheaded; two have disappeared
5	April 14, 2015	Nr. Son Shan village	Four returning refugees shot at by Burma Army; three have disappeared

It is clearly unsafe for these refugees to return home while fighting continues and the Burma Army continues to commit abuses against civilians with impunity. The Burmese military authorities must

therefore immediately stop pressuring displaced civilians to return to the Kokang area under the current conditions.

We also urge foreign diplomats, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to publicly raise concerns with the Naypyidaw government about the protection of displaced persons in the Kokang area.

#### **Details of human rights abuses, based on testimony from Kokang refugees in early May 2015:**

##### **1. Xi Mi Cun village:**

- **One elderly villager shot dead; another burned to death**
- **Bodies of two villagers found, one beheaded; another two villagers disappear**

Most of the over 45 households of Xi Mi Cun village, 5 kms north-west of Laogai, had fled their homes after the fighting started on February 9. At first, some of the older people in the village had stayed in their houses, thinking they would be safe, while younger family members either fled to the border, or hid in the jungle nearby. However, on February 12, Burmese soldiers shot and killed a 50-year-old villager called Yang Qiao Fu, in his house, and on February 14, a blind villager in his 70s called Yang Li Suo, was found (by his son) burned to death in his house. After this, no one dared stay in the village.

Most of the villagers were staying in refugee settlements on the China border, but in mid-March four farmers had gone back to check on their houses. They did not return to the border, and another villager returning to the village found dead bodies of two of the men under one of the houses in the village. One of the bodies was beheaded, and the head was missing. The headless body was that of Yang Xiao Bao, in his fifties, who had three sons and one daughter. The other body was that of Yang Lin Guang, who was in his 20s.

The other two farmers, Yang Jai Pei, in his 20s, and Lao Er, in his 30s, remain missing and are feared dead.

##### **2. Lao Dong Go village:**

#### **Burma Army shelling kills villager in his home; son shot at while trying to bury body**

On February 15-16, shells fired from a Burma Army hilltop base landed on Lao Dong Go village, 5 kms south-west of Laogai. Most of the over 100 households had already fled after the fighting started on February 9, either to the border, or to the jungle near the village. However, a villager called Zhou Fu Gui, in his fifties, was still in his home, and was killed by a shell that landed on the house.

When Zhou Fu Gui's son returned to his house the next day, he found the body of his father, and began trying to bury it. However, the Burma Army troops on the hilltop base above the village then began firing gunshots at the son, causing him to flee before he could properly bury his father.

##### **3. Son Shang village:**

#### **Burma Army shoots at four villagers riding motorcycles, three presumed dead**

On April 14, 2015, four farmers from Son Shang village, 8 kms north-west of Laogai, were riding their motorcycles from the Chinese border to their village. Like the other residents of Son Shang, they had fled their village after fighting between the MNDAA and Burma Army started on February 9, and had taken

shelter at a refugee settlement called Cha He Ba just inside the Chinese border, about 3 hours' walk from their village.

The four farmers were travelling back to their village to check on their houses and farms. They were riding two motorbikes: on one motorbike were two brothers, named Shi You (age 18) and Jia Neng (age 23), and on the other were two cousins, named Jia Fu (age 22) and Fang Ying (age 26).

When the farmers were within eyesight of their village, they were suddenly shot at by Burma Army soldiers. Fang Ying jumped off the back of one of the motorcycles, and ran back from the direction he had come. As he was running, he heard dozens of gunshots behind him. He was also shot at, but luckily the bullets only hit the ground near his feet, and he was able to escape back to the border.

About an hour later, two other older men from the same village, including the father of Fang Ying, were walking along the same road, when they came across a group of about 20-30 Burmese soldiers. Some were driving a truck, and some were riding motorbikes, one of which Fang Ying's father recognized as belonging to his son. The Burmese soldiers stopped the two men briefly, but then let them go.

Up till now, the three young men have not returned to the border, and their relatives have not dared to go back and look for them. It is assumed they were either shot dead or captured. Shi You was married, with two young sons.

There were only eight households in Son Shang, with a population of only 30 people. The disappearance of three villagers is therefore a significant loss.

#### **Background of the current Kokang conflict:**

The MNDA, led by Peng Jiasheng, formerly controlled the Kokang self-administered zone under a 1989 ceasefire agreement with the Burmese military regime. However, in August 2009, when the MNDA refused to become a Border Guard Force under the 2008 constitution, the Burma Army overran and captured the Kokang area, driving out the MNDA, and causing over 30,000 refugees to flee to China. The regime installed a proxy Kokang force, led by Bai Xueqian, and over the past five years has been expanding Burmese military and administrative presence in the Kokang area.



*official Kokang refugee camp set up by Chinese authorities*



*makeshift Kokang refugee settlement*



*makeshift Kokang refugee settlement*

For further information, please visit [www.shanhumanrights.org](http://www.shanhumanrights.org)

<b>Spoke person:</b> Sai Hor Hseng	66: <a href="tel:0932649487">(0) 93-264-9487</a> (Shan, English)
Sai Kheun Mai	66: (0) 94-638-6759 (Burmese, English)
Office	66: (0) 93-297-7754