



Website: www.shanhumanrights.org

Email: shanhumanrights@gmail.com

Phone: + 66 (0) 93-297-7754

Urgent update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

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Villagers demand immediate release of fellow villager arbitrarily arrested and abducted by Burma Army in Mong Pawn

Villagers of Wan Kawng Yao, Mong Pawn township, southern Shan State, sent a letter on October 5, 2015, to local Burma Army commanders, police and officials, demanding the immediate release of their fellow villager, Sai Thein Tun, who was tortured, arbitrarily arrested, and abducted by Burmese soldiers in September.



Sai Thein Tun

The letter stated: “On September 10, 2015, between 12:00-1:00 pm, troops from (Burma Army) Infantry Battalion 12 from Loilem and Battalion 246 from Nam Sang, beat and kicked Sai Thein Tun, covered his head with a gunny bag, and forced him to go with them.”

Sai Thein Tun is a 33-year-old farmer. On September 10, after returning from his fields in the morning, he was resting in his house, when about 150 Burmese soldiers arrived at Wan Kawng Yao village, which has 48 households. He was one of the few men in the village at the time, as most were out tending their fields.

The soldiers went around looting chickens, food and knives from villagers’ houses. When they came to Sai Thein Tun’s house, they began beating him. Villagers who later went to his house found bloodstains on the floor.

The soldiers then pulled him outside and took him in front of the headman’s house. There an eyewitness saw them accusing him of being a Shan soldier, and kicking and beating him. They tied his hands behind his back, put a sack over his head and led him away.

The Burmese soldiers then walked to the village of Kawng Tan, about 5 miles away. They arrived there at about 11 pm. The Pa-oh National Army (PNA), a ceasefire group, has a base at Kawng Tan. According to Major Saw Naing, the local PNA commander, the Burmese soldiers told him they wanted to stay there that night, together with a captured RCSS/SSA soldier who had killed their soldiers. They told him that this captured soldier was going to be punished, and tortured until he died.

When Major Saw Naing saw the injured state of Sai Thein Tun, who had two wounds on his forehead, he was worried he might die while staying at the village, so he told the Burmese soldiers he didn't want them to stay there. They therefore left the village, and slept out in the jungle that night.

The next day, the Burmese soldiers walked south to the village of Nawng Pa Deb. Villagers in Nawng Pa Deb said they saw Sai Thein Tun, wearing a Shan uniform, being led through the village by the Burmese soldiers. They said his face was bloody and bruised.

Sai Thein Tun's parents, Lung Oom and Pa Sar, who live in Wan Kawng Yao, are extremely worried about their son.

One of the villagers of Wan Kawng Yao said, "Sai Thein Tun is such a kind and helpful person to our community. He is just an ordinary villager like us. We can confirm that he was not affiliated with any armed group."



Sai Thein Tun's house

The letter requesting the release of Sai Thein Tun was signed by the Wan Kawng Yao village administrative officer and the abbot of the village temple. It was sent to government officials, police and military intelligence at the township and provincial levels in Mong Pawn and Loilem, and also to the military commanders of the battalions that abducted Sai Thein Tun.

The letter was also sent to the Mong Pawn branch of both Shan political parties, the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) and the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP).

There has not yet been a response to the letter from any officials. However, on October 7, two days after the letter was sent, Sai Thein Tun was seen by a fellow villager in the custody of Burma Army soldiers. He was seen with a group of about 60 soldiers from Battalion 12 between the villages of Wan Kung Mark Kar and Kawng Tan.

Sai Thein Tun's village, Wan Kawng Yao, is 12 miles south of Mong Pawn, and about 14 miles north of Nawng Pa Deb village, where on September 12, 2015, Burma Army troops launched an attack involving shelling, torture and deliberate killing of civilians (<http://shanhumanrights.org/index.php/news-updates/228-burma-army-shelling-killing-and-torture-of-civilians-in-mong-pawn-constitute-war-crimes>).

