

Urgent appeal from the Shan State Refugee Committee (Thai Border) to the international community

August 30, 2017

Urgent appeal to continue providing food aid to refugees and IDPs on Shan-Thai border

We, the Shan State Refugee Committee (Thai Border), are appealing to the international community to continue providing food aid to the refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on the Shan-Thai border.

There are about 6,200 refugees and IDPs in six camps along the border, which have been set up since 1999. Over two-thirds of the camp residents are women and children.

The refugees and IDPs have all fled from the war and Burma Army persecution, particularly the mass forced relocation during 1996-1998 in central Shan State. At that time, about 300,000 people from over 1,400 villages were forced at gunpoint from their homes. Hundreds were killed, tortured and raped by the Burma Army.

Most of the forcibly relocated villagers, including elderly and young children, fled to Thailand, but have never been given protection, nor been recognized as refugees by UNHCR.

Wanting to stay close to our communities in Shan State, some of us settled on the Thai-Shan border. The camps where we stay are located on mountaintops, where it is difficult to grow food. We have therefore had to rely on international donations of rice since our camps were first set up.

We are very grateful for the aid we have received, which has enabled us to survive as communities, with our own schools, health centres and places of worship.

However, the food aid we have received has been gradually reduced, and will be totally stopped in October 2017.

We appeal to international donors not to cut off this aid while the peace process is still so uncertain.

We cannot yet return to our homes, because our villages are now derelict, or have been occupied by the Burma Army, their militia or the United Wa State Army. Despite the peace process, the Burma Army has expanded its troops, and is continuing to carry out military operations and attacks around our villages. Villagers continue to be arrested, tortured and killed.

We appeal for our rights as refugees to be respected - the right to receive adequate humanitarian aid, and to be given protection until we can return in safety and dignity to our homes once there is a political settlement and genuine peace in Shan State.

From The Shan State Refugee Committee (Thai Border)

The Shan State Refugee Committee (Thai Border) is comprised of:

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Loi Tai Laeng Camp Committee

Loi Lam Camp Committee

Koung Jor Camp Committee

Loi Sam Sip Camp Committee

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Attached is an update about the refugee situation on the Thai-Shan border by the Shan Human Rights Foundation (also see link <http://www.shanhumanrights.org/eng/index.php/333-as-conflict-escalates-in-shan-state-aid-must-not-be-cut-off-to-shan-thai-border-refugees>)