

November 13, 2014
Statement by Shan Community Based Organisations

President Obama must ask Burma's government why it is launching a large scale offensive in central Shan State during the peace process

We, Shan community based organisations, deplore the large-scale offensive that the Burma Army has been conducting in central Shan State since June 2014, which is in violation of an existing ceasefire agreement and completely negates the Burmese government's claims to be building nationwide peace. We urge President Obama to publicly raise concerns about this offensive with President Thein Sein during his visit to Naypyidaw, and to call for the Burmese government to immediately end its military operations and begin political dialogue to end the civil war.

Since June 2014, thousands of Burmese troops have been deployed to attack and seize areas in Ke See and Murng Hsu townships under the control of the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N), which signed a renewed ceasefire agreement with the Burmese government in 2012. Backed up by jets and helicopters, the Burmese troops have been raining shells on civilian areas, torturing and killing villagers, and looting property, causing the displacement of hundreds of villagers. About 300 villagers have been sheltering for over four months in a local temple, unable to return home as hundreds of troops are encamped in their village.

This military operation is clearly part of an ongoing strategy to seize and secure control of the resource-rich ethnic areas, where the Naypyidaw government has sold off numerous concessions to local and foreign investors, without waiting for political dialogue and federal reform.

The Burmese government's confidence in blatantly flouting its ceasefire agreements and continuing to commit atrocities against the ethnic peoples, is boosted by the silence of the international community. It is therefore urgently needed for President Obama to raise concerns publicly about the current military offensive in Shan State with President Thein Sein this week, and to put pressure on the Burmese government to take the following steps to bring peace to our country:

- The Burma Army must immediately end its military offensives in Shan State and other ethnic areas, stop military expansion, and withdraw troops from the conflict areas.

- The Burma Army must stop committing human rights abuses against the ethnic peoples.

- The Burmese government must start political dialogue with the ethnic resistance groups to bring about constitutional reform, and establishment of genuine federalism and democracy in Burma.
- There must be a moratorium on resource extraction and large-scale development projects in ethnic conflict areas until there is a political resolution to the conflict, and constitutional reform guaranteeing local people's rights.

We were heartened by the US government's recent blacklisting of senior Burmese government member, Aung Thaung, whose family is benefitting hugely from mining and mega-dam investments in conflict areas of Shan State. We urge the United States to exert further such pressure on the Burmese government, including suspension of military-to-military cooperation, and for the US government and US corporations to adhere to our calls for a moratorium on investments in Burma's ethnic conflict zones, so as not to endanger the peace process. Finally, we urge the US government to be a constructive partner in the peace process by supporting the ethnic peoples' demands for a genuine democratic federal union.

Endorsed by the following Shan community based organizations:

- 1) Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF)
- 2) Shan State Development Foundation (SSDF)
- 3) Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)
- 4) Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization (SSEO)
- 5) Shan State Organization (SSO)
- 6) Shan Youth Network (SYNG)
- 7) Shan Youth Power (SYP)
- 8) Shan Students Union (Thailand)
- 9) Migrant Students Group (MSG)
- 10) Tai Literature & Culture Society (TLCS)
- 11) Workers Solidarity Association (WSA)
- 12) Migrant Workers Federation (MWF)

Contact Person:

- 1) Sai Khur Hseng + 66 81 672 2031
- 2) Ying Harn Fah + 66 92 627 848
- 3) Sai Haw Hseng + 66 93 264 9487