

## **Press Release by the Shan Farmers' Network**

January 24, 2015

### **Na Hsai villagers call for the return of lands confiscated by a company for rubber plantation project in Northern Shan State**

The Shan Farmers' Network and affected villagers from Na Hsai are holding a press conference today in Taunggyi, southern Shan State to demand the return of their lands which have been confiscated by the Top Conquer Co. Ltd. Company for a rubber plantation project in Na Hsai village tract, Namtu Township, Kyaukme district, northern Shan State.

In 2007, the Top Conquer Co, Ltd. got approval from the government to implement a rubber plantation project in Na Hsai village tract on 1,500 acres of fallow, vacant, or virgin land, two miles away from Na Hsai village. However, the company implemented its rubber plantation project on areas directly adjoining Na Hsai village, resulting in the confiscation of land and farmland owned by the local villagers. Some villagers' houses were also forced to move without any compensation.

Although the company received permission to implement its rubber plantation on fallow and vacant lands, according to a land survey done by the township and land authorities in 2006, 763 acres out of 1,500 acres of the company's rubber plantation lands belong to local villagers. Out of 80 villagers whose farmlands had been confiscated, 62 villagers have not received any compensation and 18 were forced to accept a "benefit-sharing" agreement with the company, which has involved working for the company to grow rubber on their farmlands for very little income.

Because of this rubber plantation, not only have most of the villagers lost their lands, but they are also finding it difficult to carry out their livelihoods, and are facing other abuses committed by the company. Due to the presence of the rubber plantations around their village and the confiscation of their land, the villagers have had to find new farming areas far from their village. This is making it more time-consuming to go to their farm and more expensive to transport their crops. Some of the villagers can no longer send their children to school because they cannot earn enough income. Na Kok, one of the villages in Na Hsai village tract, which has 12 households, has had to move because of the rubber plantation.

Since the rubber plantation is right next to Na Hsai village and implemented on confiscated lands without any fences, when the villagers' cattle enter the plantation area, the company workers have slashed the cattle's legs and the owners of the cattle have been fined large amounts of money. In February 2014 the company manager also sued some farmers under Article 447 for farming on their own land.

Since 2013 villagers have sent several appeal letters explaining these difficulties and seeking help from members of the Shan State parliament and authorities at both townships and state levels.

On January 3, 2015, the head of Namtu Township's Land Records Department, U Tun Shwe and his team came to meet the villagers whose lands had been confiscated. The team said the villagers should accept 200,000 kyats (200 USD) for 1 acre of land as compensation, according to an order given by the Shan State Government. However, when the villagers asked for a letter of authorization as proof, the team couldn't provide one. The villagers are thus refusing to accept this compensation and insist that they want back their land, as this is their main resource for carrying out their livelihood.

The affected Na Hsai villagers and the Shan Farmers' Network have therefore recently submitted an appeal letter to the Shan State government and asked the Top Conquer Company to comply with the following demands:

1. To return the lands confiscated for the rubber plantation project to the original local villagers and farmers who are the owners of those lands.
2. To provide proper compensation to farmers who have been unable to grow crops because their lands have been being confiscated by the company.
3. To return the amount of money the villagers have paid to the company as fines.

For more information or to see a Burmese leaflet about the land confiscation, please contact [shanfarmers@gmail.com](mailto:shanfarmers@gmail.com), or visit <http://www.shanhumanrights.org/> website.

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