

Press Release by the Shan Farmers' Network

July 16, 2014

Eastern Shan State villagers call for an immediate end to destructive gold mining operations

The Shan Farmers' Network and affected villagers held a press conference today in Taunggyi to demand an immediate end to destructive gold mining operations in Mong Len, eastern Shan State.

Over ten companies have been carrying out mining in the "Loi Kham" hills east of Ta Ler, Tachilek township, since 2007. They have dug up over eleven square miles of forested hillsides, and used large amounts of cyanide to extract gold. The resulting soil erosion and water pollution have destroyed the farming livelihoods of about 340 people in two nearby villages, Na Hai Long and Weng Manaw.

The main local water source, the Nam Kham stream, is now shallow and polluted. Rice fields and vegetable gardens have been destroyed; farm animals poisoned and people are suffering from skin diseases. Families can no longer afford to send their children to school, and young people are migrating to neighboring countries to work. Only minimal compensation has been provided by companies.

"It has been two years already that I've been unable to work on my farm, because of water shortage due to the gold mining," said Sai Don, a villager from Na Hai Long.

"Without our farms, we will starve." said Sai Seng, another affected villager.

Following appeals from the villagers to end the mining, in mid-April the Shan State government authorized the township authorities to order the mining companies to stop their operations temporarily. However, the mining has not stopped, and the mining companies have tried to pressure villagers to withdraw their demands.

The affected villagers and the Shan Farmers' Network have therefore recently submitted the following demands to the Shan State Parliament:

1. The gold mining companies must immediately stop their mining operations in the Mong Len area, and withdraw all equipment and personnel from the area
2. The waterways and lands must be restored to the condition they were in before the mining began.
3. Full compensation must be provided for all the losses incurred by local villagers due to the mining.

For more information or to obtain a leaflet about detailed impacts of the mining, please contact shanfarmers@gmail.com , or visit www.shanhumanrights.org

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