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Update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

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Widespread arrests, torture, disappearance of civilians under high-level Burma Army operation in Ho Pong after fighting with NCA signatory RCSS/SSA

During July 16-30, 2017, hundreds of Burma Army troops from at least eight battalions patrolled through three village tracts in Ho Pong township, southern Shan State, arresting and torturing civilians, in what appears to be collective punishment for an armed clash with the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA) in the area on July 14, 2017. The whereabouts of seven detained villagers, including a 12-year-old boy, are unknown.

A summary of the violations is as follows:

Date	Villagers suffering violations	Violations suffered	Location in Ho Pong township	Burma Army perpetrators		
				No. of troops	Battalion No.	Command responsibility
16.7.2017	3 men	Beaten, kicked, robbed; one hospitalized with injuries	Nr. Wan Mong Paeng village, Mong Paeng tract	100 troops	LIB 508	Light Infantry Division 55 (Ba Htoo based)
					LIB 423	Military Operations Command 7 (Hsihseng)
18.7.2017	3 men, 1 12-yr-old boy	Arrested, disappeared	Nr. Khok Lao & Kho Tawng villages, Nam Pa Khee tract	100 troops	LIB 424	MOC 7
18.7.2017	3 men	Beaten, kicked, forced to be guides	Na Pong village, Na Pong tract	60 troops	LIB 508	LID 55
					LIB 509	LID 55
19-21.7.2017	17 men, incl. headman & secretary; 2 women	Detained in village temple, interrogated, beaten with fists, rifle butts, and cut with knives; 3 men	Nam Khok village, Na Pong tract	100 troops	IB 225	Triangle Military Command (Kengtung)
					IB 249	Eastern Military Command (Taunggyi)

		disappeared				
29, 30.7.2017	3 men	Detained, tortured; one shot dead	Nr. Hai Khai village, Nam Pha Khee tract	50 troops	LIB 421	MOC 7
					LIB 423	MOC 7
					LIB 425	MOC 7

Troops of locally based IB 249 were involved in the July 14 clash with RCSS/SSA near Hai Khai village, Nam Pha Khee tract, after which hundreds of troops from at least seven other battalions were deployed into the area. In fact, as the RCSS/SSA is a signatory of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), the circumstances of the clash should have been discussed and resolved at the table by the Shan State Joint Monitoring Committee, set up for this purpose.

Instead, the Burma Army has responded with a large-scale military operation, involving battalions from various commands. The similar pattern of violations by different battalions, sometimes operating jointly, indicates high-level orders to persecute civilians. Troops from both the Eastern and Triangle Regional Commands carried out the large-scale arrest and torture of 19 villagers -- including 2 women -- in Nam Khok temple.

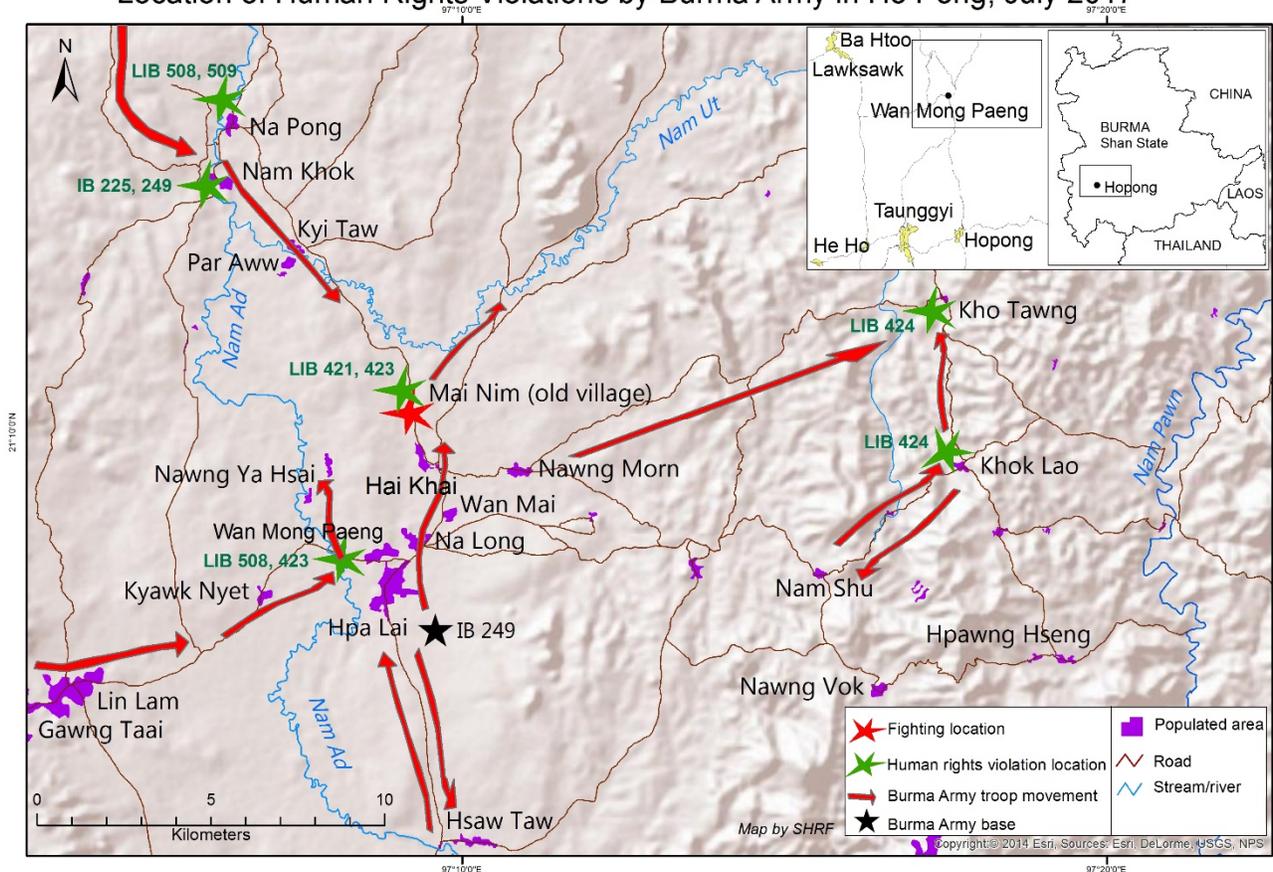
These violations directly contravene the terms of the NCA, which prohibits torture and arbitrary arrest of civilians. By openly committing violations on this scale, the Burma Army is showing its contempt for the NCA and the entire peace process.

SHRF deplores these ongoing systematic violations against civilians. It is urgently needed for the Burmese government to hold their military to account for these violations, and for the international community to bring pressure on the Burmese government to this end.

By denying access to the UN Fact-finding Mission, the Burmese government is effectively shielding its army from scrutiny, and emboldening it to commit violations. The fact that Burma Army troops dared torture civilians on such a large scale even while Ms Yanghee Lee, UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, was in the country (from July 9 to 21), shows their confidence of impunity under the current government.

SHRF is gravely concerned for the fate of the seven detained villagers, particularly the 12-year-old boy, and urges their immediate and unconditional release.

Location of Human Rights Violations by Burma Army in Ho Pong, July 2017



Details of the violations:

Three villagers beaten and robbed by Burma Army troops; one hospitalized due to injuries

On July 16, 2017, at 9 am, two villagers, Sai Uttala and his friend Sai Hsu, rode a motorbike to go and buy pork at a shop west of Kho Long Bridge, near Wan Mong Paeng village, in Ho Pong township. When they could not find any pork for sale, they rode back towards Sai Uttala's house in Wan Mong Paeng.

At that time, about 100 Burma Army troops from LIB 508 (from Ba Htoo, Lawksawk township) and LIB 423 (from Hsihseng township) were patrolling in the area. They had been deployed there after fighting had taken place on July 14, 2017, between troops of Burma Army IB 249 (from the nearby Pha Lai base) and RCSS/SSA north of Hai Kai village, Nam Pa Khee tract. (Hai Khai is north of Wan Mong Paeng, about an hour's journey by motorbike).

The troops signaled to the villagers to stop their motorcycle. Sai Uttala, who was driving the motorcycle, slowed down and braked, but was pulled off the motorcycle by some Burma Army troops. They beat him in the head with their rifle butts until he bled and lost consciousness for about five minutes.

Sai Hsu was also beaten on his body and head about five times with fists and kicked. The Burma Army troops questioned them: "Are you spies? Why did you turn your motorbike round when you saw us?" Then the

troops took Sai Hsu's mobile phone, costing 130,000 kyat (USD 95) and 70,000 kyat (USD 51) in cash. A silver ring, a knife and one bag were also taken from him.

After that, a Burma Army commanding officer came to ask what had happened. The soldier who had beat Sai Uttala told the officer that Sai Uttala had snatched his gun.

While the two villagers were being interrogated, another village called Sai Khur was coming from his paddy field, on his way to buy some spare parts at Pha Lai village for his ploughing machine, which was broken. The Burma Army soldiers stopped him, and beat him in the head with their fists two times.

The Burma Army troops forced the three of them to go down to the fish pond west of the Kho Long bridge and shot their gun into the air two times to frighten them. They ordered the villagers not to move until they had left the area. They then retreated in the direction of Nawng Ya Hai.

After they had gone, Sai Hsu took Sai Uttala to the clinic at Wan Mong Paeng. Due to his serious injuries, the medics there referred him to Ho Pong Hospital to be X-rayed. That evening, at 8.30 pm, Sai Uttala's brother-in-law drove Sai Uttala to Ho Pong Hospital. He was admitted at 11 pm and given emergency treatment. He remained in hospital until the morning of July 19, when he was taken by five military security men (Sa-Ya-Pha) for further X-ray and treatment at the military hospital in Taunggyi. He stayed there until July 21 when he was discharged and returned to Wan Mong Paeng to recuperate at his house. He was not charged any medical costs at Ho Pong or Taunggyi hospitals, but was not given any support for food or other costs, which he had to pay from his own pocket.



Uttala being treated at Ho Pong Hospital

On July 20, 2017, Sai Hsu was called to meet the Burma Army tactical commander of LIB 423 at their base in Pa Lai together with the Wan Mong Peang village tract chairman. He was given his money back, but not his phone, as the commander said they did not know which soldiers had taken it. Instead, he was given 130,000 kyat to buy a new phone. No compensation was given for the other items. The commander apologized for the actions of his troops and requested that no news was posted online about what had happened.

The details of the three villagers who were beaten are as follows:

1. Sai Uttala, aged 39, son of Lung Pong Nya and Pa Noom, from Wan Mong Paeng village, Mong Peang tract, Ho Pong township. He is married to Nang Phit, with two children, a son aged 11 and a daughter aged 7. They have a corn farm for their livelihood.
2. Sai Hsu, aged 31, son of Lung Nya Jing, from Wan Na Long, east of Wan Mong Paeng village.
3. Sai Khur aged 23, son of Lung Hsang Leik, from Wan Mong Peang, Wan Mong Peang tract, Ho Pong township.

Four villagers, including 12-year-old boy, arbitrarily arrested by Burma Army troops, whereabouts now unknown

On July 18, 2017, at 10 am, two farmers from Khok Lao village called Sai Jarm and Sai Panda were on their way from a corn farm to a paddy field near the village carrying two rifles, one long barreled and one short barreled (used for hunting and protection against wild animals in the jungle), when they met about 100 Burma Army troops from LIB 424. The troops arrested and interrogated both of them, then took them with them, first to Khok Lao village, then to Kho Tawng village. This was seen by local villagers.

On the way, they met a 12-year-old boy called Sai Win, from Kho Tawng, who was returning home after sending his grandfather to Nawng Vok village, south of Kho Tawng. He was carrying a walkie-talkie (commonly used by villagers for communication as there is no mobile phone coverage in the area). He was arrested and taken together with the other two villagers to a corn farm belonging to Lung Wan Na, in the hills near Kho Tawng village.

Near the corn farm, the troops saw another villager called Sai La Tun tending a farm. They arrested and detained him with the other villagers. They camped in Lung Wan Na's corn farm that night.

While staying at Lung Wan Na's farm, the troops emptied rice and oil stocks into the ground, including 6 large tins of milled rice worth 60,000 kyats (44 USD), 1 large tin of cooking oil costing 20,000 Kyat (14 USD) and 2 large tins of diesel oil costing 50,000 (36 USD). They also stole a solar cell costing 100,000 kyats (73 USD), 5 cooking pots costing 30,000 kyat (22 USD), 30 plates costing 50,000 kyats (36 USD), 20 spoons costing 6,000 kyat (4 USD), 3 knives costing 15,000 kyats (11 USD), 5 blankets costing 40,000 kyats (29 USD), and 7 chickens costing 30,000 kyats (22 USD).

The next day, the troops took the four villagers to Kho Tawng, where they were detained in the village temple for one night. After that, they were taken to Khok Lao village, where they were detained in the village temple for two nights. Then they were taken to Nam Shu village (south of Khok Lao), where they were detained in the village temple for one night. The next day, a military truck took away the four villagers. It was rumored they were being taken to the Burma Army base at Pha Lai, but there has been no official confirmation of this. Their families are extremely worried about them, and whether they are still alive.

The details of the four detained villagers are as follows:

1. Sai Jarm, aged 29, son of Lung Kya and Pa Kho, from Khok Lao village, Pa Khee village tract, Ho Pong township. He is married to Nang Nyunt, who is 9 months pregnant.
2. Sai Panda, aged 30, son of Lung Ingda and Pa Awn, from Khok Lao, Pa Khee village tract, Ho Pong township. He is married to Nang Ying, with three children, all under 10 years old.
3. Sai Win, aged 12, son of Sai Jindar and Nang Lu, from Kho Tawng village, Pa Khee village tract, Ho Pong township.
4. Sai La Tun, aged 24, son of Lung Jurn Aung and Pa Lu, from Wan Na La, Na Hok village tract, Tangyan township, northern Shan State. He had come to tend Lung Siri's farm at Wan Kho Tawng.

Three villagers forced to be guides, beaten and kicked by Burma Army troops

On July 18, 2017 at 12.00 pm, a group of about 60 Burma Army troops from LIB 508 and 509 (from Keng Kham military base, north of Na Pong village) crossed from west to east of the Nam Ad River, near Na Pong village, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township. There was no bridge where they crossed, so some were able to wade across, but others couldn't, and remained on the western bank. The troops that had crossed came to the house of Lung Jing Kla, near the river at Na Pong. He was arrested, beaten with fists and kicked about eight times, and asked about whether he had seen any Shan troops in the area, and where the bridge over the river was. The troops then ordered him to take them to the bridge, south of the village.

As they passed through Na Pong village, the troops also arrested two more villagers from their houses: one called Aik Kla, who was beaten three times with fists, and another called Sai Leun, who was beaten with fists and kicked about nine times. These two villagers were also ordered to take the troops to the bridge. After reaching the bridge, the troops brought the three villagers back to Na Pong village, where they were released at 5 pm that day, after the village headman had vouched that they were civilians from his village.

The details of the villagers are as follows:

1. Lung Jing Kla, aged 45, from Na Pong, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township
2. Aik Kla, aged 33, son-in-law of Lung Mart, from Na Pong, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township
3. Sai Leun, aged 32, son of Lung Hsar and Pa La Shwe, from Na Pong, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township

Nineteen villagers, including village headman and secretary, detained, tortured in temple for 3 days by Burma Army troops; whereabouts of three villagers now unknown

On July 18, 2017 at 4 pm, about 100 Burma Army troops from IB 225 (from Mong Ton) and IB 249 began searching for Shan soldiers in every house of Wan Nam Khok (which has 120 households). They arrested nineteen villagers (seventeen men and two women) who they suspected, tied their hands behind them, and gathered them in the Nam Khok temple pavilion for three days.

During their detention, each of the arrested villagers was brought in front of the temple and interrogated about Shan soldiers, saying, "They (Shan troops) came to this area. Why did you not inform us?"

They asked questions in the Burmese language, which some villagers didn't understand properly. Villagers were beaten whether or not they answered. When the villagers replied in Shan, they were beaten even more. Some were beaten with rifle butts, in their head, and body. Some were poked with knives in the head, until they bled.

The village headman, Sai Pan Da, was among those detained and beaten. He was beaten every day with rifle butts and pierced with a knife in the face. Another villager, Sai Tu Ngwe, was hit so hard in the head that he has now lost his hearing, and can no longer move his left hand because it was hit by a rifle butt.

Two women were among those detained, and were also hit with fists several times in the face.

Detained villagers were only allowed to get food from their families. However, the families were not allowed to get close to them, and had to give food through the Burma Army troops.

Out of the detained villagers, sixteen were released on July 21, but three of the villagers - Sai Ko, Sai Dawna and

Sai Jing Da - were not released. Their hands were tied to a bamboo pole, and they were taken with the Burma Army troops when they retreated from Wan Nam Khok on July 21, in the direction of Wan Kyi Taw and Par Aww. Their families and fellow villagers are extremely worried about their condition as no one knows their whereabouts.

The village headman, Sai Pan Da, and village secretary, Sai Wiriya, who had been detained and beaten in the temple, were also taken with the Burma Army troops on July 21. They were kept with the Burma Army for one night in the jungle near Wan Kyi Taw, and then released.

Known details of the villagers detained in the temple by the Burma Army soldiers are as follows:

No.	Name	Age	Parents	Original village	Detention
1	Sai Pan Da, village headman	33	Lung Sandimar + Pa Ngwe	Wan Nam Khok village, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township	July 18-22, 2017 (3 nights in temple, 1 in jungle)
2	Sai Wiriya, village secretary	33	Lung Walingda + Pa Mawn	Wan Nam Khok village, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township	July 18-22, 2017 (3 nights in temple, 1 in jungle)
3	Lung Thart Tun	62	Lung Panna		July 18-21, 2017
4	Lung Kyaw (former headman)	60			July 18-21, 2017
5	Lung Tun Hsar	53	Pu Oom + Pa Mya	Wan Nam Khok, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township	July 18-21, 2017
6	Sai Tu Ngwe	40			July 18-21, 2017
7	Sai Ingda	39	Lung Moo		July 18-21, 2017
8	Sai Maung	20	Lung Wisar + Pa Tawng	Wan Nam Khok, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township	July 18-21, 2017
9	Ba Hseng Mai (female)	42	Lung Leik		July 18-21, 2017
10	Nang Pawn (female)	22	Lung Lu + Pa Mya Nu	Wan Nam Khok village, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township	July 18-21, 2017
11	Sai Ling Kam	20	Lung Sha Kyaw + Pa Ngeun	Wan Nam Khok village, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township	July 18-21, 2017
12	Sai Nandi	35	Lung Mayta + Pa La	Wan Nam Khok village, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township	July 18-21, 2017
13	Sai Aw	40	Lung Sai		July 18-21, 2017
14	Lung Pong Nya	44	Lung Nyo		July 18-21, 2017
15	Lung Gieng	45			July 18-21, 2017
16	Sai Lao Lee	22			July 18-21, 2017
17	Sai Ko	35		Wan Nam Khok village, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township	Detained in temple July 18-21, 2017, whereabouts now unknown
18	Sai Awna	40	Lung Aw + Pa La	Wan Nam Khok village, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong	Detained in temple July 18-21, 2017, whereabouts

				township	now unknown
19	Sai Jing Da	28	Lung Lu + Pa Mya Nu	Wan Nam Khok village, Na Pong tract, Ho Pong township	Detained in temple July 18-21, 2017, whereabouts now unknown

Note: Previous violations by IB 249 (documented by SHRF) include the gang-rape and murder of a 28-year-old woman in northern Ho Pong township on June 6, 2015.

Two villagers detained and tortured; one mentally ill villager shot dead by Burma Army troops

On July 29, 2017, at about 5 pm, a villager called Lung Ba went to get some chickens from his hill farm near Mai Nim, a deserted village north of Hai Khai, Nam Pha Khee tract, when he met about 50 Burma Army troops from LIB 421 (Pekhon-based), LIB 423 and LIB 425 (based in Ban Yin, Hsihseng township). This was the area where fighting had taken place on July 14, and the troops interrogated him about where he was going, and who had given him permission. Lung Ba answered that he had not asked for any permission, because he was just going to his farm. The troops told him that if they heard the sound of guns from his village again, the entire village would suffer. They detained Lung Ba at his farm for one night, without giving him food or water. The next day, his wife Nang Leng, who had heard that he had been detained, went to see the Burma Army troops detaining him. She told them that he was her husband, living in Hai Khai. Then they released him, at 4 pm.

On July 30, at about 9 am, Sai Wan, another villager from Hai Khai, went to his farm near Mai Nim to let his cattle graze, and met with a group of Burma Army troops from LIB 421, 423 and 425. They put plastic sheeting over his head, and beat him many times. They took him with them, his head still hooded with plastic, and released him in another location four hours later.

Also on July 30, at about 10 am, a farm laborer called Lung Shwe (who was mentally ill) was seen being arrested, beaten and shot dead by Burma Army troops from LIB 425 at Mai Nim. On August 1, a villager went and found his body, which had been burned, but he did not dare take it back to the village. The body remains uncollected, but on Aug 2, a funeral ceremony was held for Lung Shwe at the Hai Kai village monastery.

Details of the three villagers are as follows:

1. Lung Ba, aged 48, son of Lung Panda and Ba Lot from Hai Khai village, Nam Pha Khee tract; married to Nang Leng.
2. Sai Wan, aged 30, son of Lung Kaw and Ba Mai, from Hai Khai village, Nam Pha Khee tract
3. Lung Shwe, aged 45, parents and birthplace unknown

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