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Update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

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Burma Army conscripts porters, detains elderly and children during “clearance operations” near Upper Yeywa dam site in N. Shan State; arrests, tortures villagers in S. Shan State

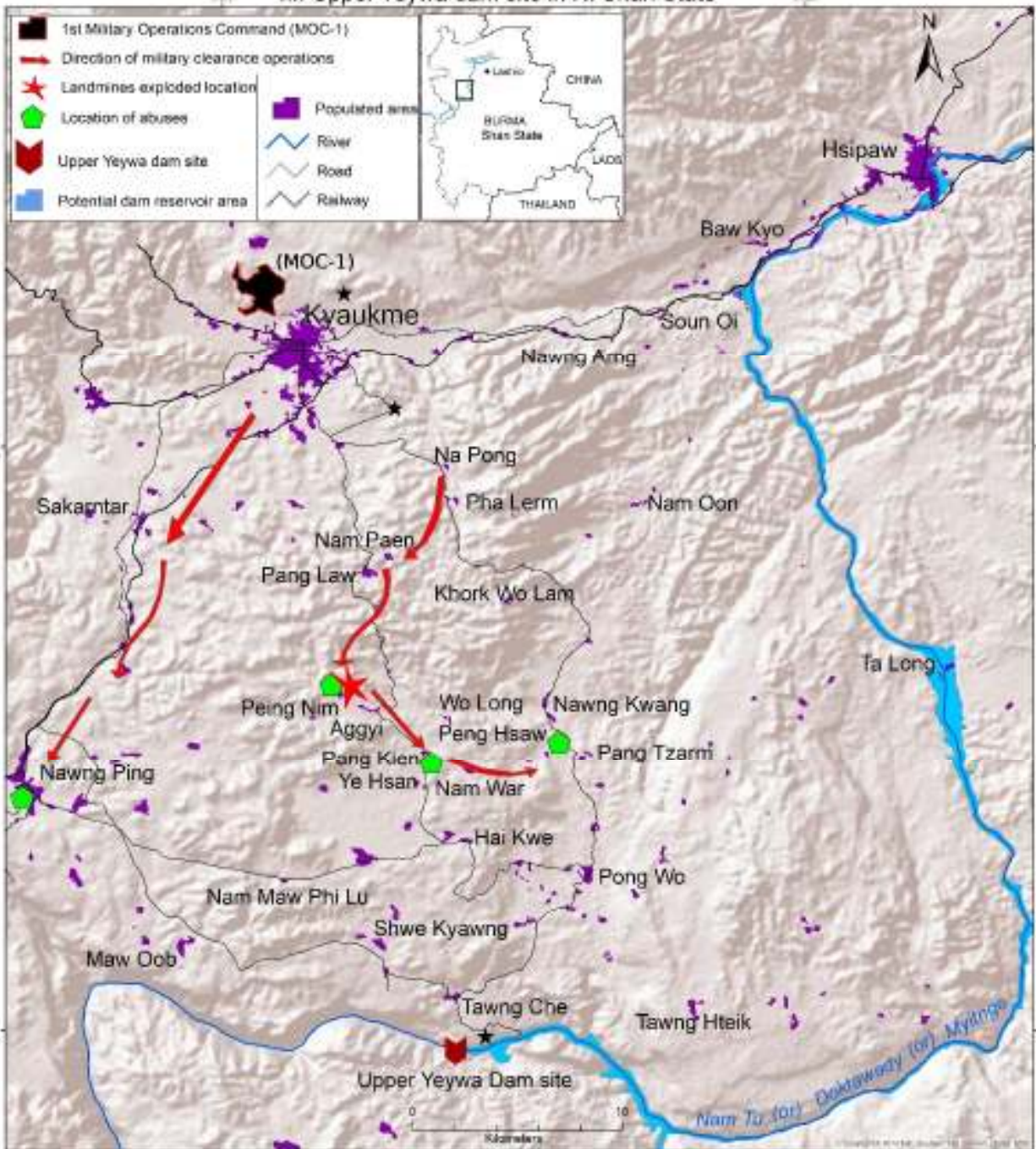
From July 23 to August 9, 2018, Burma Army troops from five battalions – LIB 115, 501, 504, 505, 506 -- carried out a “clearance operation” in villages north of the Upper Yeywa dam site in Kyaukme, northern Shan State. They forced 21 villagers to be porters and guides for up to five days, beating and kicking them for not understanding Burmese. They were only released after intervention from a Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD) MP from Kyaukme. The Burma Army troops also shot indiscriminately into a village, where they detained over 50 elderly, women and children in a buffalo stall for three nights.

Local villagers are strongly opposed to the Upper Yeywa dam, which is being built on the Namtu/Myitnge river. On August 11, 2018, eleven SNLD MPs visited impacted communities and called for a halt to the dam, invested in by Swiss, German, Japanese and Chinese companies.

SHRF has long warned that building dams in war zones fuels abuses and conflict, and has documented serious violations against civilians by Burma Army troops near the Upper Yeywa dam site during the past two years. In March 2018, SHRF documented the fatal shooting of two villagers riding a motorbike by soldiers guarding the dam site.

Meanwhile, in southern Shan State, troops from six Burma Army battalions – LIB 430, 518, IB 249, 295, 296, 284 -- and local pro-government militia, have conducted security raids across five townships since early July 2018. They have arbitrarily tortured and arrested villagers, looted and ransacked property. This appears to be part of a stepped up campaign to pressure the RCSS/SSA to withdraw from its areas of operation in southern Shan State, even though it has signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement.

Torture, forced portering, indiscriminate shooting, looting by Burma Army
nr. Upper Yeywa dam site in N. Shan State



Details of the abuses are as follows:

Northern Shan State:

Torture, forced portering, indiscriminate shooting, looting by Burma Army troops during “clearance operations” near Upper Yeywa dam site in Nawngkhio and Kyaukme townships

1. Burma Army troops conduct midnight raid on headman's house, loot cash

After midnight on July 23, about 40 Burma Army troops of LIB 115 raided the house of the headman of Nawng Bing Long village, 12 miles southwest of Kyaukme town, accusing him of collecting taxes for Shan troops.

At 2:00 am, three trucks carrying the Burma Army troops arrived at the house of Loong Sai Naung, the 50-year-old headman. They surrounded the house, forced open the door, and entered. They accused the headman of having a gun, and said someone had sent them a letter saying he was collecting taxes for Shan soldiers.

The soldiers then searched around the house till 3:00 am, but did not find anything suspicious. However, they took 50,000 kyat (=24 USD) which was in the house. Then they returned to their base.

Before they left, the troops told the headman not to put news about what had happened on the internet or Facebook.

2. Four villagers forced to guide Burma Army troops

On August 2, 2018, about 70 Burma Army troops from Light Infantry Battalion LIB 501 based in Kyaukme, led by Colonel Aung Naing Htoo, left from Na Pong village to carry out a clearance operation. They passed through Nam Paen village, and at 11 am arrived at Pang Law village, Pang Law tract, Kyaukme township. They asked the Pang Law headman to find them a small Chinese truck and a guide to take them to Peing Nim village, Pang Law tract. The headman found them four villagers and a small Chinese truck, which took them as far as Pang Khuay. After that, they went on foot to Peing Nim village, arriving at about 1 pm.

The four villagers from Pang Law forced to guide the troops were:

1. Sai Than Maung (the owner of the truck)
2. Sai Pa Aye (the truck driver's assistant)
3. Sai Jarm Lu (guided the troops to Peing Nim, and had to stay with them at Aggyi for 2 nights)
4. Sai Kyaw (guided the troops to Peing Nim and had to stay with them at Aggyi for 2 nights)

3. Indiscriminate shooting; eleven villagers forced to be porters, kicked and beaten; over 50 villagers detained in buffalo stall; looting and destruction of property

When the 70 troops from LIB 501 arrived at a hill overlooking Peing Nim village (which has 38 households), the two guides from Pang Law village told the Burmese soldiers that they were

not familiar with the way ahead. They asked the soldiers to wait while they went to find some villagers who knew the area. The soldiers said that since they had already arrived at the village, they should all enter together. Then they started walking down into the village of Peing Nim.

As the soldiers at the front entered the village, the soldiers in the rear were still coming down the hill. At that time, two landmines suddenly exploded about 90 meters away from the village and killed two soldiers instantly. Assuming they were under attack, the Burma Army troops began shooting indiscriminately in all directions, for about 30 minutes. The house of a woman called Pa Kui was hit by bullets.



Motorbike destroyed by Burma Army

The troops then began searching around the village. They searched and ransacked the house of the village headman Loong Dewing, destroying three motorbikes and stealing 500,000 Kyats (=340 US\$) in cash.

Villagers were frightened by the shooting and fled in different directions. Some villagers who were still in their farms did not dare return home. Over 50 villagers, mostly elderly, women and children remained in the village, and were ordered by the troops to stay together at Sai Tun's

buffalo stall. They were forced to remain there for three nights, from August 3 to 5. One of the villagers, who tried to go and check on his house, was slapped by a soldier.

Another villager called Sai Dawna was confined by the Burma Army in another house. When he tried to go the toilet, telling the Burmese troops in Shan where he was going, the troops kicked him down from the house.

The troops arrested eleven male villagers and forced them to be porters, carrying bags and supplies, as they set off towards Aggyi village at about 2 pm. Only five Burma Army troops were left at Peing Nim to guard the village.

The eleven villagers were kept as porters for five days until they were released on August 8. Some were kicked and beaten when they were unable to understand commands in Burmese. The names of the eleven villagers, and abuses suffered, are as follows:

1. Loong Hsarng Karn
2. Sai Aye
3. Loong Jarm (hit in his left eye)

4. Sai Canda
5. Sai Kham Lu (kicked one time)
6. Sai Ai Larn (kicked three times)
7. Sai Aung Khing (kicked three times)
8. Sai Aung Jing (beaten once with a gun butt)
9. Sai Lu
10. Sai Ai Tawn (his hands were tied behind his back)
11. Loong Sai Tu

4. Six villagers forced to porter/guide/translate; one mentally disturbed villager kicked and beaten; one slapped

On August 3, most of the Burma Army troops from LIB 501 left Peing Nim village and arrived at Aggyi village, Pang Law village tract, at about 7 pm. The village has 80 households. The troops camped around the village, staying in villagers' houses, and eating their food, till August 8.

The troops patrolled around the village, continuing to use the eleven villagers from Peing Nim as porters. They also forced three villagers from Aggyi to porter for them: Sai Khemin, Loong Zik Ta, and Sai Kor. They were forced to stay with together with the troops at night. Another Aggyi villager called Sai Pee, was forced to accompany the troops and act as their translator for four days.

On August 4, a mentally disturbed villager called Sai Dawna, aged 30, was kicked down from one of the houses and beaten. Another village, Loong Jarng Tun, aged 50, who was feeding his buffalo, was slapped and threatened that his neck would be cut with a sickle, when he was unable to understand what the troops were saying to him.

On August 5, the Burma Army troops in Aggyi summoned Loong Kham, the headman of the village of Pang Kaen (northeast of Aggyi) and another villager called Sai Sor, aged 40, to come to Aggyi and act as guides for them.

5. Houses searched; conscripted villagers only released on request of SNLD MP

At 5 am on August 8, the Burma Army troops left Aggyi and went to Pang Kaen village, Hai Kui tract. They still had the eleven villagers from Peing Nim, four villagers from Aggyi, and two villagers from Pang Kaen with them as porters/guides.

When the troops arrived at Pang Kaen village, they searched two houses, one belonging to Sai Jarm Pa and Nang Mya Mawn, and one belonging to an elderly woman called Nai Lai.

At 11 am on August 8, Sai Tun Win, an SNLD MP from Kyaukme, arrived at Pang Kaen village with four SNLD colleagues, to try and help the local villagers. They met with the commanding officer, Colonel Aung Naing Htoo, at the Pang Kaen monastery, and asked him to release all the villagers who had been forced to be porters.

Col. Aung Naing Htoo told them: “During our clearance operation, we called the villagers to guide us because we didn’t want to arrest the wrong people. We don’t know who are civilians and who belong to armed groups. So, we just called them to come with us. We will release them very soon.”



Local conscripted villagers and SNLD MP at Pang Kaen monastery

After this, the fifteen villagers from Peing Nim and Aggyi were released by the troops and allowed to return home. However, the two villagers from Pang Kaen were not released that day, and had to remain with the troops until they left the village on August 9.

6. Three Burma Army battalions loot property

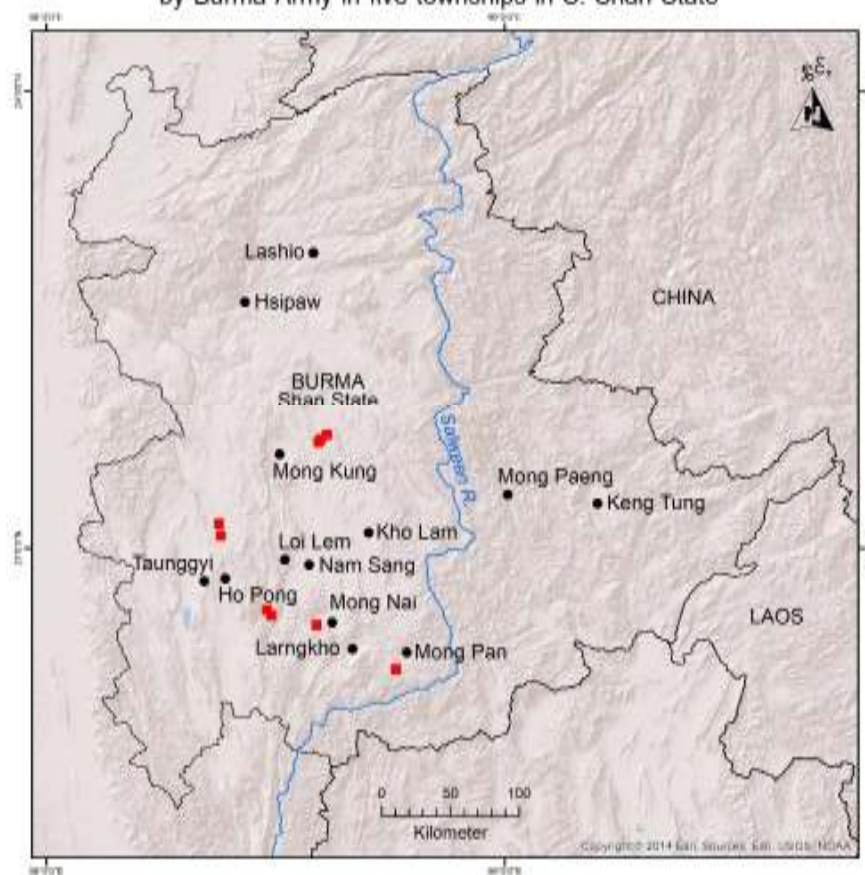
On August 9, 2018 at 10:30 am about 60 Burmese soldiers from three Burma Army battalions - Nawnng Khio-based LIB 504, Namlan-based LIB 505 and LIB 506 under Military Operations Command 1 of the Northeast Regional Command (Lashio) - entered Peing Hsaw village, Pang Jarm village tract, Kyaukme township, and forcibly entered Pa Maan’s house. They stole 190,000 Ks (126 US\$), one hand-phone, and a power bank and ransacked boxes.



Local villagers' property ransacked by Burma Army

Southern Shan State:

Location of arbitrary arrest, torture, looting
by Burma Army in five townships in S. Shan State



Arbitrary arrest, torture, looting in five townships as Burma Army steps up pressure on RCSS/SSA in southern Shan State

1. Four villagers arrested by Burma Army in Loi Lem township

On July 6, 2018, over 30 Burma Army troops from LIB 430 led by Captain Taung Lin Htut, based at Kawng Hsai, went on patrol in the forest and villages in southern Loilem township. They went from the hill of Loy Yey down toward Nawng Pa Deb village, Nawng Lieng village tract.

In the evening of July 6, they arrested two villagers of Nawng Pa Deb village;

1. Loong Tawn, aged 58, son of Loong Dewing and Pa Mai, from Pauk Koong Nawng, Nawng Pa Deb, was arrested at 6 pm, at Kawng Mu Nawng, north of Nawng Pa Deb village adjacent to the village.
2. Sai Tam, aged 35, son of Loong Nge and Mae Pa Mang, from Pauk Koong Awk, Nawng Pa Deb, was arrested at 8 pm at Kawng Mu Koong Awk, east of Nawng Pa Deb; adjacent to the village.

On July 12, the same troops from LIB 430, coming from the direction of Nawng Mo, arrested two villagers from Loang Khing, Nawng Lieng village tract, Loi Lem township. The two villagers had gone to buy some food at Nawng Mo and were on their way home when they were arrested by the Burma Army soldiers.

The two villagers arrested by the Burmese soldiers were:

1. Sai Nguay, aged 22, son of Loong Pi and Pa Inn; residents of Wan Mu Ser village, Nawng Lieng village tract, Loi Lem township.
2. Sai Kyune, aged 22, son of Loong Kyaw and Pa Oak, originally from Nawng Le, Nam Hu Mai, Na Yai village tract, Nam Sang township. They had come to work at Kham Nam Yawk, Nawng Lieng village tract, Loi Lem township.

The four villagers were arrested and detained by the Burma Army at a base in Wan Yen, south of Ho Pong. Their relatives went to the base, but were not allowed to see them.

(SHRF has received news that two of the villagers were released at the end of August, but is still confirming details about this and the fate of the other villagers arrested.)

2. Burma Army loot villagers' property in Mong Nai township

On July 25, 2018 at 7:00 pm, about 30 Burma Army troops from LIB 518 and IB 284, led by Captain Kyaw Sein Lat, based in Mong Nai under Military Operations Command 2, came to Wan

Nam Sar Bae village, Wan Nar tract, Mong Nai, and started looting chickens and money of local villagers.

1. Loong Da Pa Tun lost two chickens, worth about 9,000 Ks
2. Sai Aw Da and Nang Leak lost about 33,000 Ks, but when Sai Aw Da went to tell their Captain, the money was returned.
- 3. Six villagers including headman beaten by pro-government militia group in Ho Pong township**

At night on July 26, about ten local pro-government militiamen from Company no. 9, came from Nam Hu Lieng village, Mwe Daw tract, Taunggyi township to Wan Nar Leng village, Mong Peang village tract, Ho Pong township. They searched villagers' houses, and beat six villagers, including the headman.

The six villagers suffered injuries as follows:

1. Loong Kawwi, aged 50 years, the headman of the village, was beaten with rifle butts, causing his head and hand to bleed.
2. Sai Kurt, aged 27, son of Loong Bay and Pa Jarm, was kicked and hit with a rifle butt in the head till it bled. He has run away and his whereabouts are unknown.
3. Sai Pandawa, aged 21, son of Loong Loi Pa Koi, had a pistol pointed at his head.
4. Sai Long, aged 31, son of Loong Bay and Pa Poi, was kicked till he fell down, and hit with rifle butts twice on his backbone.
5. Sai Koi, aged 36, son of Loong Lurng and Pa Lurn, was kicked about 15 times and beaten with a rifle butt in his eye 3 times and one time in his back.
6. Sai Sujindar, aged 38, son of Loong Kaw Sarm Hla and Pa Suue, was beaten about 20 times



Headman Loong Kawwi's head injury

- 4. Farmers interrogated, one arrested for possession of walkie-talkie, in Mong Pan township**

On August 3, at 12:30 pm, 35 Burmese soldiers from IB 296 entered Nawng Loam village, Na Mawn village tract, Mong Pan township, and interrogated villagers working on their farms. They found one walkie-talkie on a farmer called Sai Citta (which he used for everyday

communication) and accused him of being a Shan soldier. They then arrested him and detained him at Nawng Loam village.

On hearing this news, elders and other fellow villagers went to ask for his release, saying he was just an ordinary village and did not belong to any armed group. The Burmese troops released him at 2 pm.

The IB 296 troops were based near Mai Bok Pang Pi village, 30 miles west of Mong Pan town. During the first week of August, they carried out increased security checks on civilians. They went from village to village in Mong Pan, interrogating farmers in their farms, making some afraid to even go to farm. The Burma Army IB 296 main base is at Tarkaw-Karli (Kunhing township) which is under the control of the Eastern Central Regional Command at Kholam, Namzarng township.

5. Burma Army loot villagers' livestock in Mong Kung township

On August 9, 2018, at 5 pm, about 90 Burma Army soldiers from IB 295 under Military Operations Command 17 came from Par Karng, Mong Khun village tract, Mong Kung township, and stayed one night at Kyaung Jark temple in Mong Khun tract. They searched in and under the old and new part of the temple and the dining centre without asking any permission from anyone, but found nothing.

The next day, at 7 am, the same Burmese troops left Kyaung Jark temple and headed to Wan Koong Yome, Mong Khun village tract, Mong Kung township. They searched two villagers' houses and looted their property:

1. Loong Aloka, 50 years old, the son of Loong Da and Pa Hsuay.
2. Loong Hsuay, 40 years old, the son of Loong Da and Pa Hsar.

Property looted from the houses included three chickens costing 20,000 Kyats (= 14 US\$), one oven costing 10,000 Kyats (= 7 US\$) and one knife costing 10,000 Kyats (= 7 US\$).

At 11:30 am, the troops left Wan Koong Yome and went to Wan Pang in the same tract. They entered the house of Sai Pee, aged 25, the son of Loong Su + Pa Nu, and stole property worth 125,000 Kyats (= 80 US\$).

6. Burma Army troops ransack 18 houses in Ho Pong township

On August 15 at 4 pm, about 45 Burma Army troops from IB 249, based at Ba Htoo, entered Nawng Ya Hsai village, Mong Peing village tract, Hopong township, Taunggyi district. They came from the direction of Wan Gyi Taw, four miles north. They searched 18 houses in the north

section of Nawng Ya Hsai village. They upturned and emptied boxes, leaving possessions strewn across the floor. Villagers whose houses were ransacked were:

1. Loong Mai and Pa Mart
2. Pa Moan
3. Pa Kyi
4. Sai Awcitta and Nang Oo
5. Sai Wiriya and Nang Gurt
6. Pa Hsi
7. Sai Citta
8. Sai Narinda and Nang Noan
9. Sai Sujada and Nang Teng
10. Pa Kyi and Sai Awnada
11. Pai Koi
12. Pa Nu
13. Sai Pandi and Nang Jing
14. Loong Tun and Pa Tun
15. Loong Aw and Pa Kyi
16. Loong Kaw
17. Loong Noom
18. Loong Mae

When the troops found nothing suspicious in the houses, they went to stay in the south section of Wan Nawng Ya Hsai.

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