

March 9, 2020

Save the Salween Network Statement of Condemnation

Save the Salween Network strongly condemns the Myanmar Police Force's attempted arrest of environmental activist Saw Tha Boe. On the night of March 6, 2020, police from Myaingkalay and Hpa-an police stations attempted an arrest in connection to the January 17, 2020 traditional prayer ceremony in Nat Kone Village, Bakat Village Tract. In the ceremony, participants prayed to avoid danger associated with the discolouring of the local water source of approximately 30 villages near a coal-powered cement factory.

1. The Hpa-an town General Administration Department filed a complaint in the Hpa-an Township Court under Section 505(b) of the Penal Code. Saw Tha Boe never received a summons to attend court and the police immediately attempted the arrest.
2. Under Section 505(b) of the Penal Code: 'Whoever makes, publishes or circulates any statement, rumour or report, with intent to cause, or which is likely to cause, fear or alarm to the public or to any section of the public whereby any person may be induced to commit an offence against the State or against the public tranquillity'.
3. The prayer ceremony was conducted by local residents and village monks from Myaingkalay District, Hpa-an Township, based on Karen religious traditions. The raid and attempted arrest based on the ceremony is a violation of the rights of citizens, human rights and democratic standards.
4. We strongly condemn the actions of the township General Administration Department and the Karen State Government, which severely hinders Myanmar's peace process and steps towards federalism.
5. Save the Salween Network (SSN) and Burma Rivers Network (BRN) makes the following urgent demands to the Government:
 - a. Immediately drop all charges against Saw Tha Boe, an activist working for environmental conservation and protection, which is important for sustainable development, federal democracy and the peace process.
 - b. To recognise and value human rights, citizenship rights, indigenous rights and basic standards of democracy.
 - c. Ethnic conflict and human rights violations should be avoided in order to ensure the smooth running of the 2020 elections.



d. Avoid any actions that hurt national peace, reconciliation and the establishment of a sustainable federal democracy.

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