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BURMA

ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
advocacy, capacity-building & strategic initiatives for human rights & democracy

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BURMA/MYANMAR'S PEACE PROCESS MUST PRIORITIZE HUMAN RIGHTS ABOVE MILITARY SUPREMACY & DESTRUCTIVE BUSINESS DEALS

Bangkok, Wed – Human rights activists have called for the Government of Burma/Myanmar to ensure that its peace process prioritizes human rights above military supremacy and destructive business deals.

In its submission to the third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Myanmar, Southeast Asian human rights network ALTSEAN-Burma stated that in the first half of 2020 alone, there were **608 armed clashes or attacks on civilians**. These incidents took place in 10 out of the nation's 14 States and Regions, and involved killings, arbitrary detention, torture, sexual violence, forced labor, and mass displacement.

Most incidents involved the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Army) and a significant proportion of incidents occurred in places covered by peace or ceasefire agreements. Of particular concern is **Tatmadaw destruction of multiple COVID-19 prevention sites** in Karen/Kayin State, where the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is party to the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement; and in Kachin State, where the Tatmadaw has declared a unilateral ceasefire.

Peace agreements that prioritized business deals for Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) — in infrastructure development, resource extraction, and commercial agriculture — have contributed to serious violations of economic, social and cultural rights of communities impacted by protracted conflict. Several EAOs have enjoyed impunity for such violations and breaches of relevant law in return for their cooperation with the government. Competition between armed groups, and violent reactions to local resistance against harmful projects, threaten to reignite conflict in these areas.

The failure to effectively address threats from extractive industries continues to exact a heavy toll. In the jade mining sector alone, approximately 400 deaths have resulted from eight major and numerous minor landslides in the Hpakant area of Kachin State since mid-2018. On 2 July 2020, 172 people were killed and 31 injured in a landslide in the area.

In Karenni/Kayah State, armed groups were granted mining and other concessions for their cooperation with the Tatmadaw. Instead of complying with Myanmar's own (weak) laws, or international business and human rights frameworks, combatants-turned-businessmen have engaged in violent intimidation and human rights violations.

In its submission, ALTSEAN-Burma called for legislative and practical reforms to stop armed actors and businesses from hurting communities. Specifically, Myanmar is called upon to:

- **Take measures to stop the Tatmadaw and other armed groups under the government's control from engaging in human rights abuses against civilians;**
- **Ensure that all economic projects conduct inclusive impact assessments and implement measures that allow communities to exercise Free, Prior, and Informed Consent; and**
- **Prioritize comprehensive protection of human rights above profit, and ensure genuine inclusion of women and civilians in the peace process.**

The UPR is a process in which every UN member state has its human rights record reviewed, and is given a set of recommendations for improving its human rights situation. The review is conducted by a UPR Working Group under the UN Human Rights Council, and it is conducted on the basis of information provided by the state itself, human rights experts, and contributing members of civil society. Myanmar was previously reviewed in 2011 and 2015. The majority of recommendations made, including those it accepted, have not been implemented.

ALTSEAN-Burma Coordinator Debbie Stothard said states participating in the UPR process should strongly advocate for a fundamental transformation of Myanmar's peace process: "The decades-long exclusionary and corrupt peace process, as well as the five-year-old Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, have contributed to more conflict, more human rights violations, and more threats to regional human security. It's time that affected civilians and human rights were put at the core of the peace process, not military supremacy or profit," she emphasised.

Read ALTSEAN-Burma's submission [here](#).

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