

## “WE STILL WANT OUR LAND BACK”: HURFOM INTERVIEW WITH VICTIMS OF LAND CONFISCATION



July 17, 2018

HURFOM: On July 1<sup>st</sup> 2018, HURFOM met with two victims of land confiscation, Nai Lin Aung and Mi Aye Mi San, a couple from Wae Rat village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State. Their land was confiscated by Burma Army Artillery Battalion No. 315 in 2004.

“The plot we bought for our house was about 40x60 ft. It was located between Wae Rat and Wae Gali villages [of Thanbyuzayat Township]. We bought it in 2004. Six months after we bought it, Artillery Battalion No. 315 confiscated it.

“We bought the plot for 1.35 million kyat in 2004 [equivalent to 30 to 40 million kyats or US \$21,084 to \$28,112 today]. When we bought the plot we had no immediate plans to stay on it. We worked in Thailand and left the plot in its original state. Other people were doing the same as us. After we bought the plot, we had no money to build a house. So we went to Thailand to work and save money to build a house. But even though we had been planning to build a house on the land, the military confiscated it and fenced it off with barbed wire.

“After the military confiscated our plot of land, we didn’t ask anything about

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**HURFOM REPORT SHOWS WORRYING TREND IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN MON STATE AND MON AREAS OF SOUTHERN BURMA**



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## MNEC GIVE UP ON REQUESTS FOR FUNDING FROM THE MON STATE GOVERNMENT FOR MON EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



September 11, 2018

HURFOM: According to an official from the Mon National Education Committee (MNEC), the committee has given up on requesting education funding from the Mon State government.

“More than a month ago we requested 50 million kyat (US \$32,446) for the Mon education system. We hoped to repair about 50 damaged schools with that money. But our proposal doesn’t match the budget policy of the Mon State government. So the government replied that we must change the goal of our proposal to get funding. They advised us to plan an organizing event or a kind of competition to get funding. We informed the committee [MNEC] about their suggestion and the committee decided to stop requesting funds from the government,” said Nai Rot Ga Kao, an official of the MNEC.

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News

# FARMERS REQUEST COMPENSATION FOR LAND CONFISCATED BY PRISONS DEPARTMENT IN KAREN STATE

August 27, 2018

**WCRP:** The Prisons Department of the Myanmar Ministry of Home Affairs confiscated farmland from three villages in Bar Ann Township, Karen State – Hlarka Myint village, Latkanar village, and Hla Ka Daung village tract. The farmers are calling on the government to return the land to its owners or else pay compensation for the land.

The Prisons Department's confiscations happened between 1988 and 2014. The farmland, totaling around 800 acres, had belonged to 84 farmers. The department has not yet done anything with the confiscated land, and so the 84 farmers are calling on the department to give them permission to work on their land. If the department will not allow them to work on their lands, they request that the department give them compensation for their lands.

*"Each year they have different reasons for confiscating our land. I think that the Myanmar Prisons Department confiscated the land because they wanted to extend their prisons. They didn't notify us in advance. It was only when we went to our farms that we saw they had put up signs on our lands. They didn't even give us the permission to work on our land after they confiscated it",* said U Saw Khin Hla Myine, a victim of the land confiscation.

Farmers from the three villages described the livelihood difficulties affecting those whose land was confiscated by the previous government. Since they have no land to work, the farmers' families have faced many challenges to their livelihoods, and many have had difficulties paying for their children's education.

Moreover, the department did not do anything with the land, but they also do not give the land back to the owners. Some land has become vacant.

According to U Shwe Tun, one of the residents, *"Farming used to be our livelihood. In the rainy season this year, the Myanmar Prisons Department let the prisoners grow plants on our land, and we lost our paddy plants. Land owners have faced many difficulties with their livelihoods."*

These confiscations are a misuse of power by the authorities from the Prisons Department. The authorities also prohibited the farmers from reporting the land confiscations to the village administrator.

*"There are 24 farmers who have Form 7 ownership rights for their land. In 2016 the Myanmar Prisons department gave 16 of them a temporary permit to work on their land,"* said U

Tar Own Hlaing, a victim who received a temporary work permit for his land.

The 16 farmers who got permits to work on their land owned roughly 141.64 acres of land, but the authorities from the Prisons Department only allowed them to work 91 acres of land with a temporary permit. The Department also prohibited the farmers from planting crops on some of those 91 acres. On February 15<sup>th</sup>, the 16 farmers submitted a report about the land to the Review Committee on Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands.

With regard to the complaint submitted, an officer from Lat Ka Nar village prison and a representative of the Township Land Records Department met with the farmers on April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017. They gave the farmers temporary permission to work the land.

In 2013, the Township Land Management Team gave farmers permission to work 71.07 acres of land out of the nearly 800 acres previously confiscated by the prisons department. Unfortunately, according to an authority from the prisons department, even though the farmers of those lands have Form 7, because the land is within 400 yards of the Security area of the prison, therefore they don't allow the farmers to use the land, and they couldn't give back the remaining confiscated farmlands as a withdraw land to the farmers.

To receive the farmland back, the farmers have sent a request letter to the President, the Review Committee on Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands and Karen State Government office for their land.

The farmers said they have sent seven letters this year, including to the Karen State Land Investigation Committee on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Chairman of the Review Committee on Confiscated Farmlands and Other Lands on May 10<sup>th</sup>, and the MP from the Committee of Agriculture, but they have heard nothing from them so far. A Member of Parliament has said that they will do a field survey, however they haven't arrived yet. If the MP comes to the village, the farmers all want to meet with the MP.

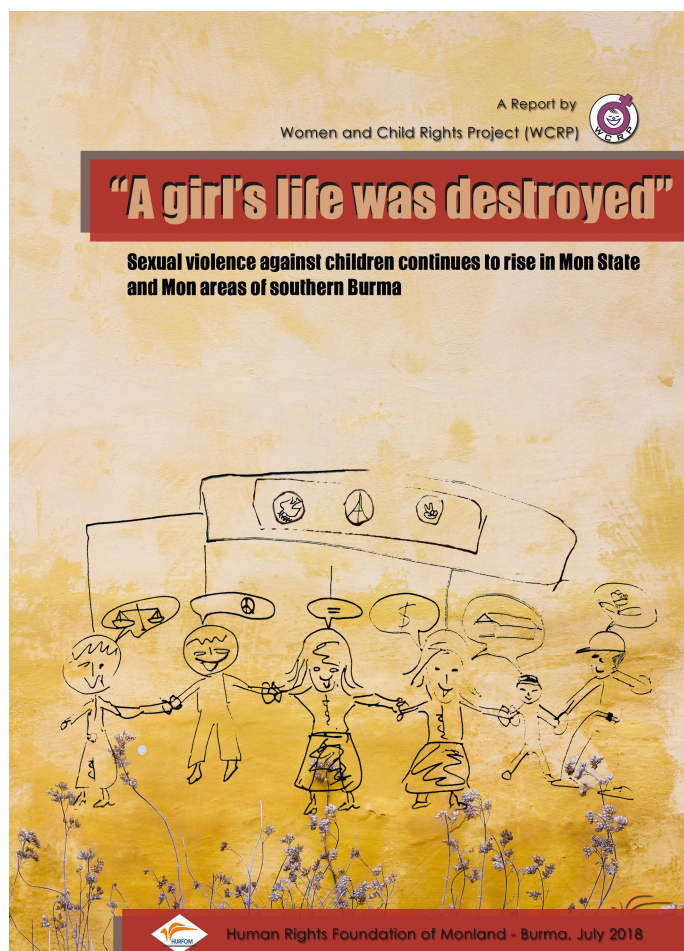
The remainder of the confiscated farmland is about 700 acres. Victims asked the department for permission to grow plants on the lands which the department is not using.

*"This rainy season, we planted crops on the land which we had worked in previous years. This year, however, the prisoners came and dug up our plants and planted their own. All our plants were destroyed",* said U Shwe Tun, from Lat Ka Nar village.

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## HURFOM REPORT SHOWS WORRYING TREND IN SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IN MON STATE AND MON AREAS OF SOUTHERN BURMA



July 25, 2018

HURFOM's Women and Child Rights Project (WCRP) releases: "A Girl's Life was Destroyed": Sexual violence against children continues to rise in Mon State and Mon areas of southern Burma'. The report documents 14 cases of sexual violence against children, including 11 cases of child rape, which have occurred since June 2017 in Mon State and Mon areas of southern Burma.. [Download [Full Report](#)]

Reported cases of sexual violence against children are rising across Burma. In February the Ministry of Home Affairs released crime statistics for 2017, showing a 27% increase on the previous year in the total number of recorded rapes, and a 33% increase in recorded child rapes. WCRP's research reveals several factors underlying the violence, including a lack of sex and gender education, poverty, and the impunity for perpetrators caused by inadequate legislation.

As well as documenting the incidents, WCRP documented the obstacles which families face when seeking justice for their children. In over half of the cases which WCRP documented, the family first reported the crime to village administrators. Village-level justice is flawed as it often involves arbitration and compensation rather than prosecution of the perpetrator. Families who chose to take the case to the police faced problems too. Burma continues to use archaic legislation dating back to 1861 when prosecuting gender-based violence. In addition, families described corruption in the judicial system. A lack of

legal knowledge, and a lack of access to legal aid, compounded most families' problems. WCRP confirmed these findings in interviews with members of civil society who are working to improve survivors' access to justice.

The Burmese government must reform current legislation to combat this worrying trend. Burma's domestic legislation concerning gender-based violence is antiquated and inadequate, as it lacks specific provisions for sexual violence against children. All the cases in this report which were brought to trial used the 1861 Penal Code. As a priority, legislators must pass the Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women Bill, which has been stalled in the *Pyithu Hluttaw* since 2013. In addition, HURFOM recommends that the Burmese government eliminate corruption in police and judicial systems, educate all parties involved in judicial processes on sexual violence and gender equality, and provide sex and gender equality education in order to eliminate harmful beliefs surrounding sexual violence.

*"Since we released our previous report on sexual violence against children – "Cracks in the Silence" – in March 2017, sexual violence towards children in Mon State and Mon areas of southern Burma has continued. Since then we have documented 14 more cases of sexual violence against children. But all these cases are only what was collected by HURFOM, and there may have been many more cases which were not reported to us. As I see it, the number of cases of sexual violence towards children in Burma has increased, as we can see both in our report and on social media. I think the perpetrators do not respect the law in Burma; they believe that they can pay money to finish the cases. The government should take more action and respond quickly to solve the problem of sexual violence toward children. They should not release on bail perpetrators in child abuse cases. Moreover, the government must raise the punishment for perpetrators in order to protect children from sexual abuse."*

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# “WE STILL WANT OUR LAND BACK”: HURFOM INTERVIEW WITH VICTIMS OF LAND CONFISCATION



the land. We didn't do anything as we didn't know how to reclaim our land. We just made our livelihood in Thailand. We had no money to buy another plot of land. The price [of land] changes over time. Even though we've worked in Thailand for years now, we don't have enough money to buy land as the price is always going up. Since we can't buy land, we're staying in Thailand and making our livelihoods there.

“Our parents went to the Thanbyuzayat “Combined Office” [a one-stop service made up of township-level departments such as the General Administration Department, the Land Record Department, the Police Force, the Rural Department, the Education Department, and the Health Department] several times to try to reclaim our land. In 2014–15, our parents went to the office again before the rainy season and the office replied that if the land owners themselves returned to the village, the land would be given back. My mother asked the office to return the land to her as she had bought it on our behalf. But they replied they could only give back the land to the

real owners. So my mother went back home and phoned us. We went back home before Songkran in 2015 and went to the office again.

“But the office said they were really busy and had no time to do an investigation as Songkran was drawing near. We were instructed to come back after Songkran.

“A week after Songkran, we went to the office again. When we got there, the officials asked why we had come to the office. We replied that we were there regarding the case of land confiscation by the military in Wae Rat village. We explained that the office had previously said that the land would be given back when the real owners returned to the village. We asked them to solve the problem now that we, the real owners, had come back to the village.

“The office told us that after Songkran, there had been a change in the officials on duty and the office was now run by new staff. The new staff could not find the old records [related to the land confiscation]. We had nothing to say after that reply.

“I want to get my land back. We had to pay 1.35 million kyat 13 years ago. Now the price is over 10 million (US \$7,027).

We have no money [to buy another plot] so we want our land back. If we could afford another plot, we wouldn't reclaim our land. We've built a hut near our parents-in-law's house, and right now we stay in that hut as we can't buy land of our own.

“My mother has filed reports many times to several departments. We paid 5,000 kyat (US\$3.51) to the Secretary of the Wae Rat Village Administration to file a report to Naypyidaw, but we have received no reply. We also asked Nai Chan Aye of the All Mon Region Democracy Party to file a report, and we asked other organizations and parties for help too. We filed reports several times to several departments or offices. I think we would have got a reply if they wanted to give us back our land. Now, we aren't getting any reply so they aren't willing to give the land back, I think.

“We bought the land with money we earned by our labor. It's very painful to lose this land to others. We still want our land back.”

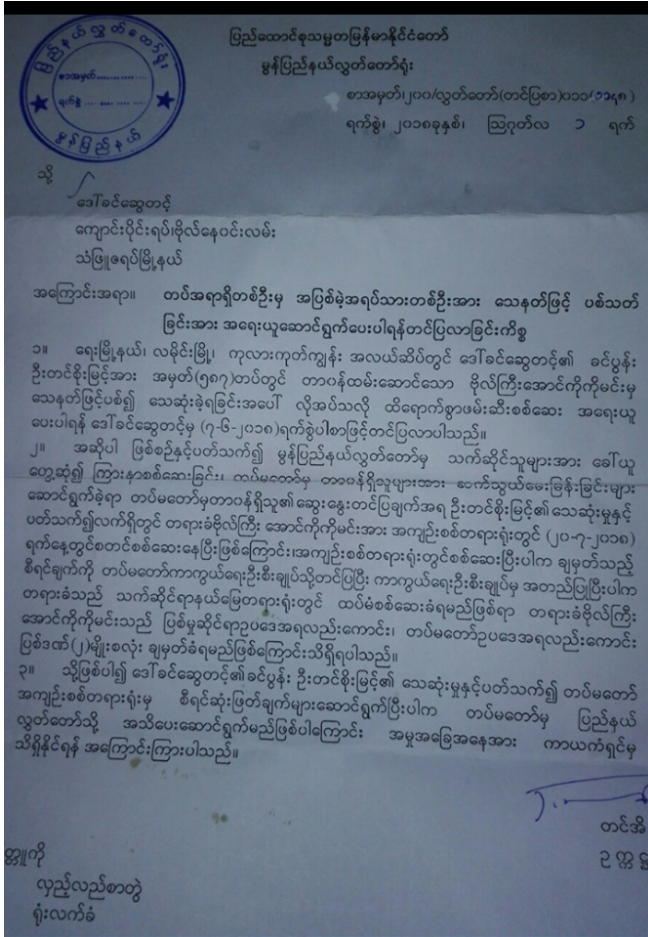
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The MNEC was found in 1972 under the NMSP and runs 133 Mon national schools and 32 mixed schools (schools run by the MNEC and the Mon State Ministry of Education). Currently, the MNEC has 780 schoolteachers and 59 educational staff.

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News

# FAMILY OF MAN KILLED BY CAPTAIN AUNG KO KO MIN FROM LIB #587 STILL WAITING FOR ANSWERS AFTER ALMOST 3 MONTHS



August 10, 2018

It has been almost three months since **Captain Aung Ko Ko Min from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #587 shot and killed U Tin Soe Myint**, a villager from Kalagoke Island, Lamine Town, Ye Township, Mon State. However, the victim's family has yet to receive confirmation of the perpetrator's arrest and has had little communication regarding the case from either the military or the Mon State government.

The deceased man's father-in-law, Nai Chan Aye, explained that, "We sent a letter to the [Mon] State government and parliament in May. It has been about three months already, but we have heard nothing from them. We haven't even received any notifications from them. We would like to know whether they have charged the perpetrator."

Moreover, on July 27<sup>th</sup>, the victim's family had an appointment with a military commander from MOMC #19 in Ye Township and the family brought representatives from CSOs as support. However, the victim's family did not meet a military commander as he was on a trip; the family instead met with Deputy Commander Kyaw Zaw Lin.

Nai Chan Aye added, "the deputy commander said the military commander was on a trip. They said they investigated the case and sent a report to Senior General

Min Aung Hlaing. Once they receive a response from him, they will take action on the case. Currently, there has been no solution yet. In addition, we sent a letter to file a complaint to the Mon State government and parliament; we have not heard from them yet."

On June 26, the victim's family reported the case to the Mon State Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC-S) as well.

"We reported about the case and would like to charge Captain Aung Ko Ko Min as an example for the other villages so that they do not to suffer like we are now in the future," added Nai Chan Aye.

Daw Khin Swe Thint, the victim's wife, said, "I want the truth. It has been nearly 3 months now [since we was killed] but I have heard nothing from the government. Now I live at my father's home and do not have many worries, yet but I have some difficulties for my children who are in school."

U Tin Soe Myint was killed after he failed to produce his National Registration Card (NRC) to Captain Aung Ko Ko Min.

U Tin Soe Myint's mother-in-law had borrowed 3,000,000 kyat (US \$2,228.82) him, and he planned to take her farm if she could not repay the loan. His mother-in-law, however, rented her farm to another man, U Htay Ko, to grow crops on it. U Tin Soe Myint was unhappy about that, and destroyed U Htay Ko's fence. On May 13<sup>th</sup>, they called in the head of 100 households to solve the problem. Captain Aung Ko Ko Min went to the home of the 100 households head to discuss the dispute.

When U Tin Soe Myint informed the captain that he had lost his NRC, "the captain got up and kicked the victim once and punched him five times. He kicked him again as he was coming down the stairs. Three soldiers, wearing the victim's clothes, punched him down the stairs. After punching him, they took him to Tat-kone military base located between Auk-seik and Ah-le-seik on Kalagoke Island. They told me, his father-in-law, to go home," continued Nai Chan Aye.

An administrator from Ye Township explained, "once they got to the military base, the captain interrogated the victim again. Then the victim got angry and asked the captain, 'Who are you? Why are you doing this to me? What is your position?' The victim said that he could travel anywhere in Burma that he pleased. After that, the captain got angry and shot the victim with an A2-0929 gun at around 8 pm at night on May 16<sup>th</sup>."

The body was sent from Kalagoke Island to Lamine Hospital for forensic examination and his body was cremated in Lamine Township. Captain Aung Ko Ko Min was initially charged at the Lamine Police Station with murder under Article 302 of the Penal Code and detained at LIB No. 587 on May 18<sup>th</sup>.

U Tin Soe Myint is left behind by a wife and three children, one in Grade 9 and another in Grade 5.

## News

# LOCALS REFUSE TO PAY ELECTRICITY FEES IN PROTEST AT BEDOK CONSTRUCTION COMPANY BREACHING ITS AGREEMENT

July 23, 2018

**HURFOM:** Bedok Construction and Engineering Company's 24-hour electricity project in Northern Ye Township, Mon State began to operate on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2018. On July 8<sup>th</sup>, when the company came to collect the fees for residential power consumption, locals found that the fees were higher than what they had previously agreed. Furious, local villagers have protested by refusing to pay the fees.

This incident is the latest in a string of disputes between the company and villagers. In May 2018, local farmers petitioned the Mon State Parliament to force Bedok Company to remove electricity poles from their land, which the company had **constructed without compensating the farmers**. In June 2018, villagers reported that the company **failed to properly fix village roads** after the company's trucks had destroyed them.

Before installation began, the company, in the presence of Mon State MP Dr. Min Soe Lin, held a consultation meeting with local villagers from Lamine, Maw Kanin, Kaw Dut, Thaung Pyin, Thaung Bone, Hnit Karen, and Tha Bway Thit villages at Rehmonnya Monastery of Lamine City.

At the consultation, the company and the local villagers agreed that the electricity would cost 285 kyat (US \$0.20) per unit, tax included. U Nyi Nyi Lwin, representing Bedok Company, said the fee could be increased or decreased by 20%, and if there is a change in the electricity fee, the company would inform the villagers a month in advance. The company also agreed with the villagers that they did not need to pay for street lighting.

*"When the company collected the electricity fee this month [July], they said every household who has used the electricity [provided by the company] must pay 5,970 kyat (US \$4.19) for street lighting. The company wrote in our electricity bills that if we don't pay, they will cut off our electricity on the 17<sup>th</sup> of this month [July]. Another problem is that the electricity fee has been increased up to 425 kyat (US*

*\$0.29), including tax. None of the villagers can accept the change,"* said Nai Chit Tun, an activist from Hnit Karen village.

Nai Chit Tun continued that none of the villagers knew why the electricity fee has been increased from 285 to 425 kyat, and the company had not explained to them clearly about their policy on changing the electricity fee.

Similarly, villagers from Tha Bway Thit have refused to pay the 7,650 kyat (US \$5.37) fee per household for street lighting, according to U Thein Nyne, a local villager.

*"Before, when we agreed to buy the electricity, the company said the fee per unit was 285 kyat. But after setting up the electricity, they have increased the fee per unit to 425 kyat. There is no transparency. It's totally not what we had agreed in the meeting,"* said Nai Thein Tun, a local villager.

The company also promised that a tax stamp would be included on the electricity bill, and that the villagers would not need to pay a service fee. But their promise is seemingly far from the reality.

*"What's happening now is that we have to pay 425 kyat per unit for electricity, more than 5,000 kyat for street light plus 500 kyat (US \$0.35) as a service fee. We can't accept these fees. We've been informed that the electricity will be cut off if we don't pay the fees. We are planning a meeting on July 11<sup>th</sup> at the Village Administration Office [to decide how to respond],"* said Nai Chit Tun.

At about 3pm on July 10<sup>th</sup>, U Nyi Nyi Lwin, a Bedok Company official, met with local villagers and administrators from Maw Kanin, Thaung Pyin, Thaung Bone, and Kaw Dut villages and Lamine City to discuss electricity usage for small-scale enterprises. At the meeting, local villagers presented their case about the fee for electricity and utility poles, according to Nai Way, Lamine Myo Ma 1 Administrator.

U Nyi Nyi Lwin responded, *"I alone can't solve this problem. I will discuss it with our committee. The company owner U Sein Win is currently travelling on*

*business. I can give a reply only after he has returned."*

On July 11<sup>th</sup>, Hnit Karen villagers organized a meeting at the Village Administration Office and formed a representative committee to negotiate directly with the company. If the negotiation does not go well, the committee will file a report to relevant government departments, the Mon State Chief Minister, members of the Mon State Parliament, and the Union Government.

HURFOM contacted Bedok Construction and Engineering Co. Ltd. for comment about the dispute, but the company replied that they cannot comment as their owner, U Sein Win, is abroad.

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News

# NMSP'S LAND APPLICATION HAS LOCALS WORRIED ABOUT DEVELOPMENT AGENDA



July 17, 2018

**HURFOM:** The New Mon State Party (NMSP) has applied to local authorities for permission to use land near Andin and Hnit Karote villages, Andin village track, Ye Township, Mon State. Local villagers are worried about the possible connections to investment projects.

*"The local villagers didn't know that the NMSP had applied to use the land. We don't know when they made the application. We found out via the Village Farmland Management Committee only after clerks from the Land Record Department came to do a survey. We're worried that the NMSP will hand over the land to an investment company. The NMSP has connections with investment companies and it's a cause of worry for the locals,"* said Mi Dar Dar, a member of Andin Youth Group.

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, U Bo Bo, Deputy Chief Officer of Ye Township Agricultural Land Management and Statistics Committee, phoned U Myint Thein, a member of the Andin Farmland Management Committee, stating that he would like to do a land survey on June 13<sup>th</sup> at the NMSP's proposed project area.

*"I told U Bo Bo that it wasn't okay, as the village administrator wasn't in the village at the time. But he replied that it didn't matter whether the village administrator was in the village or not. He said he just wanted to know whether the land in the project area has owners or not, and that they had to file a report to the Mon State Vacant, Fallow and Virgin Lands Management Committee within three days. He said the Village*

*Farmland Management Committee had to accompany them when they did a land survey tomorrow [on June 13<sup>th</sup>],"* said U Myint Thein.

The NMSP's proposed land area is located near Andin village at Fields No. 1143 and 1144, and near Hnit Karote village at Field No. 1145. According to the Land Record Department, the estimated area of the fields near Andin is about 300 acres. That area is also known as Parlain Field. The area near Hnit Karote covers about 100 acres and is locally called Kyaut Tan Field.

*"According to the Land Record Department, Field No. 1145 has an owner, but Fields No. 1143 and 1144 are virgin land. Fields No. 1143 and 1144 aren't actually 300 acres. They are just 70 or 80 acres. In 2016-17, the Andin community applied for land use in those areas to do a community mangrove forest project. But there was no reply,"* said Mi Dar Dar.

The Chief Officer of the Ye Land Record Department told HURFOM that he did not know the exact date that the NMSP's land proposal was made, but he was sure that the NMSP proposal came only after signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

Nai Win Hla, the head of NMSP's Home Affairs Department, said, *"It's true that we've applied for land use in Andin. After signing the NCA, we filed the application to do local development projects. But at the moment, we haven't decided what to do yet. As Andin is near the ocean, fish farming could be a possible project. But we aren't sure yet. We haven't just applied in Andin; we've*

*also applied for land use in other villages."*

*"We knew that the NMSP is also involved in the Offshore Supply Base Project in Andin. Now the party has applied for land use too, locals don't have too much trust in the party. There is lack of trust between the locals and the party,"* said Mi Dar Dar.

The Offshore Supply Base planned for Andin has been embroiled in controversy. In January 2018, the Ye township general administrator forced two members of Andin village Farmland Management Committee to resign after they refused to rezone farmland for the development. The villagers' and farmers' representatives had criticized the lack of transparency by the company involved in the project.

According to the villagers, the local community wants the NMSP to explain the possible projects related to the land application, and to get the consent of villagers before starting the projects.

Nai Win Hla said, *"The NMSP aims to take the land before the [investment] companies grab it. We've applied for land use in as many places as we can. This is our plan. But the NMSP can't do projects alone so we have to cooperate with companies. If local people don't accept the projects, we won't do them. And we will make the companies who work with us fully accountable to local people."*

The Andin community plans to re-apply for the use of Fields No. 1143 and 1144 as part of the community's ongoing mangrove forest conservation project.

*"When implementing a project, we have to sacrifice some natural resources. But we must reduce the impacts as much as we can. If other investors have cooperated with the authorities and directly enter our region, we can't stop them. But both the NMSP and the local villagers can negotiate with the companies who work with us. We will make companies fully accountable,"* said Nai Win Hla.

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## News

## OVER 200 LOCALS JOIN PROTEST MARCH CALLING FOR THE SHUTDOWN OF ANTIMONY FACTORIES IN MON STATE

August 23, 2018

**WCRP:** On July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2018, over 200 people who live near the Mawlamyine industrial zone in Mon State joined a protest march calling for the shutdown of two antimony factories. The protesters said the factories' air pollution is affecting locals' health.

U Zaw Zaw Han, spokesperson for the demonstration, said locals had sent numerous letters to the Mon State government about the bad smell from the factories, but because nothing has happened the locals are protesting, calling on the government to shut down the factories. The protesters collected signatures during the protest, and they will send them to the president in ten days.

*"Locals have suffered because of the bad smell from the factories. It can affect our health. Many people in these areas can smell the bad smell, but the government says it doesn't smell bad, and the smell only lasts for a few seconds. The [Mon] state government has not listened to our voice, and so we are protesting. After we finish collecting the signatures from the protest, we will send them to the president,"* U Zaw Zaw said.

Locals told HURFOM that the smells emitted from the factories are like rotten eggs or burning acid. They suffered thirst, dizziness, and say that it affects the health of locals. In addition, bad water

emitted from the factories destroys surrounding farmland. For these reasons the locals are calling for the factories to be shut down.

Locals accept that there are varieties of bad smells in the industrial zone. *"The smells are really strange. After inhaling the smell, we feel thirsty. We know that there are a variety of bad smells in the industrial zone, and we can tolerate the other smells. One time, the government measured the smoke emitted from the antimony factories, but they did not measure the smell from the factory chimneys; they just left the machine outside,"* said U Zaw Naing, the leader of the protesters.

Moreover, when the locals visited the antimony factories, they describe how there is no smell inside the factory, but the smell starts after they leave the factories.

U Zaw Oo added, *"We don't want to have these antimony factories in the industrial zone. The government allowed the factories to operate temporarily, but that was six months ago now, and the locals have been suffering the effects. The previous government shut down the factories four days after receiving our report about the smell. Now, we have been sending letters to the new government for the past six months but we have heard nothing from them."*

*"When the Mon State government tested the air from the antimony factories, the air quality metres showed that the air was over the limit for air pollution. However, the government said we could not assume it was over the limit based on that test,"* U Zaw Zaw Han.

*"We feel that the new government only represents the interests of the factories. They don't even feel bad for us."*

The Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Dr Min Kyi Win said that, *"Regarding the complaint letters from the locals, we have tested the antimony factories twice with our equipment. We have sent the test results to the Mon State government. According to our measurements, the air quality metres have shown different results. Sometimes the air quality was above the safe limit for air pollution, and sometimes it stayed below the limit and is nothing to worry about."*

He added, *"The smell of burning is not continuous for 24 hours. We have visited the factories to test the smell, and we only sometimes smelled this unique smell from the factories."*

The government instructed the factories to use air quality metres to measure the smoke emitted from the factories' chimneys.

## 8-YEAR-OLD GIRL RAPED WHILE TRYING TO SEEK SHELTER FROM THE FLOODS

September 20, 2018

**HURFOM:** On September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2018, an 8-year-old girl who was taking temporary shelter from the flood was raped by a motorcycle taxi driver near Mawlamyine Railway Station.

The girl lives in B— village, Hlyne Bwa Township, Karen State, and was temporarily staying in Shan Su Street, Aung Kyin Ward, Mawlamyine, Mon State. She was raped near the station while trying to go to Mote Tama Town.

*"The taxi driver took her mother and younger brother together with the girl. When they reached near Than Lwin Park, the driver dropped off her mother and brother saying he would take some clothes for the girl. He took the girl with*

*his bike,"* said an official from the Mawlamyine Police Station.

After 15 minutes, the driver came back with the girl.

*"When they came back, the mother asked the girl what happened and she replied that the driver didn't give her the clothes but raped her in a bush nearby the old Taung Yoe Tan Street (on the way to the station). When the mother checked her vagina, she saw it was bleeding. The mother took her child to the Dyne Wun Kwin Police Station and reported the case. The Dyne Wun Kwin Police Station transferred the case to the Mawlamyine Township Police Station,"* continued the official.

The perpetrator was arrested at the motorcycle taxi stand nearby the Mawlamyine Railway Station on the evening of September 3<sup>rd</sup> and he was charged with rape.

*"Now the perpetrator has been detained at the Mawlamyine Police Station. After receiving the medical results of the girl, we will bring him to the court. Currently, the Mon State Department of Social Welfare and the Woman and Child Organization take care of the child,"* said the police official.

Also, on August 18<sup>th</sup>, a 15-year-old girl was repeatedly raped by her 43-year-old father in T—- village, Mudon Township, Mon State.

HURFOM Activities

# HURFOM DONATES HUMANITARIAN AID TO THE THOUSANDS AFFECTED BY FLOODING IN KYAIKMAYAW TOWNSHIP



August 10, 2018

On August 7<sup>th</sup> 2018, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) visited Mae Ga Row, Ni Ton, Kwan Ngie, and Ma Ka Sam villages of Pyar Taung (Doe Sai) Region, Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State and provided humanitarian aid to the flood victims in those villages.

In July, Bilin, Thaton, Kyaikto, Kyaikmayaw, and Ye townships in Mon State were flooded, and more than 13,000 people in Bilin, 2,000 in Thaton, 2,400 in Kyaikto, 500 in Kyaikmayaw, and 700 people in Ye were flooded out, according U Myint Than Win, the Director of the Mon State Government Office.

In response, HURFOM donated commodities such as rice, cooking oil, onions, and canned fish, equivalent to 2 million kyat (US \$1,360).

Water levels began to rise in those villages on July 26<sup>th</sup> and continued to gradually rise until leveling out on August 3.

By August 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, locals reported that water levels had reduced by about one foot.

*"The water level of the rivers in Kyaikmayaw Township usually increase [in the rainy season] every year, but not so much that the rivers flood. There have been about 500 people who have had to move to the rescue camp," he continued.*

Mae Ga Row is comprised of 300 houses, Ni Ton 250 houses, Kwan Ngie 350 houses, and Ma Ka Sam has about 30 houses.

Mon State has seen some of the worst flooding in 40 years during this year's rainy season. Thousands have been left stranded in their villages or have had to be evacuated.



## News

# NMSP CLAIMS THEIR LAND USE APPLICATION AIMS TO HALT LAND GRABS BY INVESTMENT COMPANIES, BUT LOCALS SEE IT DIFFERENTLY

July 18, 2018

**HURFOM:** The New Mon State Party (NMSP) has been **applying** for permission to use land in the Parlain Region of Andin village tract, Kun Khari Island, and Man Gyi, Dani Dagyar, and Kaw Hlyne villages in southern Ye Township. Nai Win Hla, head of the Home Affairs Department of the NMSP, claims that the NMSP's application for land use is aimed at halting land grabs by investment companies who want to exploit local natural resources.

*"Even if we can stop [investment companies from exploiting land and natural resources] now, we don't know what will happen in the next five or ten years. Mainly, we want to avoid exploitative investments. We want to protect our land and our people. We've been trying to create job opportunities and promote local development,"* said Nai Win Hla.

Even though the NMSP said the application for land use was for local development, the Andin community lacks trust in the party, according to Mi Dar Dar, a member of the Andin Youth Group.

*"When the NMSP comes, a company always comes with them. So, the locals*

*don't trust the party anymore,"* said Mi Dar Dar.

Nai Win Hla also mentioned that as no one could resist the power of investment forever, the NMSP must take over the land in the interests of Mon nationals' affairs.

He continued that when famous business persons directly cooperate with authorities or governments to do a project, no one can stop them. It is dangerous for those who oppose the projects.

*"For instance, like Mawlamyine Cement Company Limited – the Cement Factory in Kyaikmayaw – they were in direct contact with the Mon State government, so no one could stop them. We aim to provide protection to avoid similar situations,"* said Nai Win Hla.

Soi Ha, the abbot of Man Gyi village, said that they oppose stone production in Balae Kha Boi Mountain near their village because they want to protect their village and local livelihoods.

*"If we lose this mountain, the village won't be protected from strong winds. And the villagers will feel the impact in every aspect of their lives,"* said Abbot Soi Ha.

*"The local people have a fear of both the NMSP and the [investment] companies as they have learned a lesson from the 'coal case' [the controversial Andin coal-fired power plant project, which has inspired ongoing community-led environmental conservation projects]. Personally, I don't want to touch the natural resources in our region. I want to promote sustainable livelihoods. The fishing industry in our region can earn millions of kyats per year. If the company gets [the land], then only the company gains the profit. The poor villagers only benefit in the short-term. So, if possible, I would rather see no investment to this region,"* said Nai Shwe, the Chief Organizer of the Andin Mon Youth Group.

*"Even if we can stop [investment companies from exploiting land and natural resources] now, we don't know what will happen in the next five or ten years. Mainly, we want to avoid exploitative investments. We want to protect our land and our people. We've been trying to create job opportunities and promote local development,"*



News

# "WE REALIZED THERE WAS NO CHANCE TO GET OUR LAND BACK SO OUR HOPE FADED AWAY" – VICTIMS OF LAND CONFISCATION SPEAK OUT

သို့

ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ

လယ်မြေနှင့်အခြားမြေများသိမ်းဆည်းခံရမှုများကြောင့် ပြည်သူများနစ်နာမှုမရှိစေရေးအတွက်

စုံစမ်းရေးကော်မရှင်

နေပြည်တော်

ရက်စွဲ။ ၁ - ၈ - ၂၀၁၃။

အကြောင်းအရာ။ ။ မတရားသိမ်းဆည်းခံရသောရာဘာခြံကို ပြန်လည်ရရှိလိုခြင်း။

အထက်ပါအကြောင်းအရာနှင့်ပတ်သက်၍ မွန်ပြည်နယ်၊ သံဖြူဇရပ်မြို့နယ်၊ ကျေးရွာနေ

နိုင်ငံသားစိစစ်ရေးကော်မရှင်အမှတ်

ကိုယ်တိုင်ဆောင်သူပိုင်ဆိုင်သည့် ကျွန်မ၏ရာဘာခြံမြေဧက(၂၅)ဧက၊ ကွင်းအမှတ်(၂၀၀၀)၊ အပိုင်းတွင်(၁၆)နှစ်သား စိုက်ပျိုးထားသော ရာဘာအပင်(၁၀၀၀)ရှိပြီး ၂၀၀၄ခုနှစ်တွင် အမှတ်(၃၁၅) တပ်ရင်း၊ အမြောက်တပ်၊ တပ်ရင်းမှူး-ဒုဗိုလ်မှူးကြီးတင်နိုင်မှ အတင်းအဓမ္မ သိမ်းဆည်းခံရပါသည်။ ၂၀၀၅ခုနှစ်မှစ၍ (၃)နှစ် အစေးလုံးခွင့်ကို အခကြေးငွေပေးပြီး လုံးခွင့်ရခဲ့ပါ သည်။ ၂၀၀၈ခုနှစ်မှစ၍ ယနေ့အထိ လုံးဝခံစားခွင့်မရသည့်အတွက် ကျွန်မ၏မိသားစု စားဝတ်နေရေး အခက်အခဲများစွာ ကြုံတွေ့ခဲ့ရပါသည်။

သို့ဖြစ်ပါ၍ ၎င်းသိမ်းဆည်းခံရသော ရာဘာခြံအား ပြန်လည်ရရှိလိုပါသဖြင့် စုံစမ်းရေးကော်မရှင် လူကြီးမင်းများမှ ကူညီဆောင်ရွက်ပေးပါရန် လေးစားစွာ အသိအမှတ်ပြုအပ်ပါသည်။

၁၀/သဖရ(နိုင်) ကျေးရွာ၊ သံဖြူဇရပ်မြို့နယ်

မိတ္တူကို-

ဦးနိုင်ဦး - ပြည်နယ်လွှတ်တော်ကိုယ်စားလှယ်၊ သံဖြူဇရပ်မြို့။

ဥက္ကဋ္ဌ - မွန်ဒေသလုံးဆိုင်ရာဒီမိုကရေစီပါတီ၊ သံဖြူဇရပ်မြို့။

လက်ခံ

August 22, 2018

On August 8<sup>th</sup> 2018, the Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) interviewed Mi A— of Pa Nga village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State. Her land was repeatedly confiscated by Burma Army Artillery Battalion No. 315 between 2004 and 2008.

"Three or four years ago, we were struggling to get our land back. We filed a report many times. But we never had a chance to meet with any authorities. At that time, we filed a report to the [Mon State] parliament. Via the parliament, our report would go to the National Land Resource Management Central Committee. But the commission

never contacted us. Our voices faded as time went by.

"Our plantation has more than 1,000 rubber plants. The plants were ready to produce latex, but we could only do rubber tapping for just two or three years. After the confiscation, we were allowed to work on our plantation, but we had to pay tax for each rubber plants [to the military]. After working [like this] for two or three years, the army totally confiscated our land. We had no access to our plantation.

"Our whole family had relied on the plantation. We were very happy to have such a plantation. We had made our livelihood on the plantation. We

were in trouble after losing our land to the military. We requested help from many departments and organizations, but it was useless.

"Last year, we all decided to make another attempt. But we realized there was no chance to get our land back so our hope faded away. We surely want our land back. If the military decided to give back the land, we will accept the land even if we have to pay money for the rubber plants that have additionally been planted by others.

"As we lost our plantation, we run a small shop to make our living. We also have a small hillside plantation. We're in trouble and we have to struggle a lot for our living. We can do nothing as we are doomed.

"Later we daren't touch the land nearby the army base. I learned our lesson, so we'll never buy land nearby the army again. We learned a harsh lesson. They confiscated our land and sold it to others. When seeing that, we suffered a lot. It's difficult for us to see other people working in our plantation.

"Soon after the plantations were confiscated, every farmer was active to file a report and fight for their land. Now, no one speaks out about the confiscation as they realized there is no chance of getting the land back. It's difficult to organize the farmers. Even when meeting each other, we don't talk about the land confiscation. We act as if nothing happened.

"We're still grieving for our plantation. We had invested our sweat and labor in the plantation. When it was ready to harvest, the army confiscated the plantation. It was a grievous loss to us."

According to the report, Mi A— has lost 25 acres of land and 1,000 rubber plants to Lieutenant Colonel Tint Nyne of Burma Army Artillery Battalion No. 315 in 2004. She was allowed to work on her plantation from 2005 to 2008 after paying tax to the military. However, after 2008, the army totally confiscated her plantation and she has no access to her plantation at all.

• • • • •

## News

# FLOODING IN MON STATE LEAVES FARMERS FACING LIVELIHOOD DIFFICULTIES

September 6, 2018

Farmers in Mon State are facing livelihood difficulties following recent flooding that has left their farmlands submerged.

“Almost all of our plants were destroyed because of the flooding. We can’t even replant the paddy as there is still flooding and the water level has not dropped yet. If we wait until there is no water, it may take until around October, which is too late to start growing. The rainy season is over at that time, which means paddy fields must use water from the sea in order to survive,” said Nai Kyat, a farmer from Ni Don village, Kyaukmayaw Township.

In addition to water shortages after the rainy season has ended, farmers must access sufficient water via pipes connected to the sea, which increases the cost of replanting the paddy.

Daw Sein Than, a Ni Don village resident explained, “Our career is agriculture. We may face large [livelihood]

difficulties if the paddy production is low. Therefore, we would still work on that even if the costs are high to grow. We have no choice. It is importance for us to get the rice. It is very difficult for the farmers who have no money.”

Affected farmers are concerned that they will not see the benefit of replanting as the costs are too high, even though the Mon State government has announced plans to provide one basket of paddy seeds and 8,500 kyat (US \$5.50) per acre to farmers.

“We have provided paddy seeds and money to farmers in some areas [already]. To offer the remaining areas [aid], we have already requested 100 million kyat [US \$64,788] from the Mon State Chief Minister, and once we receive it, we will disperse it,” said U Kyi Soe, an officer at the Mon State Department of Agriculture.

Similarly, on August 14th, the Thaton District Agriculture Department provided 100 million kyat to flooded areas in the 24 village tracts in Bilin

Township in order to help farmers replant their paddy fields.

“We have not received the aid yet. We are not fine to replant the paddy because it is too late for us. We don’t have any dam to get water from. We have many challenges. Moreover, currently we also face difficulties in buying paddy seeds. We won’t grow the plants this year,” said U Hla Aung from Mae Nit Kaung village, Bilin Township.

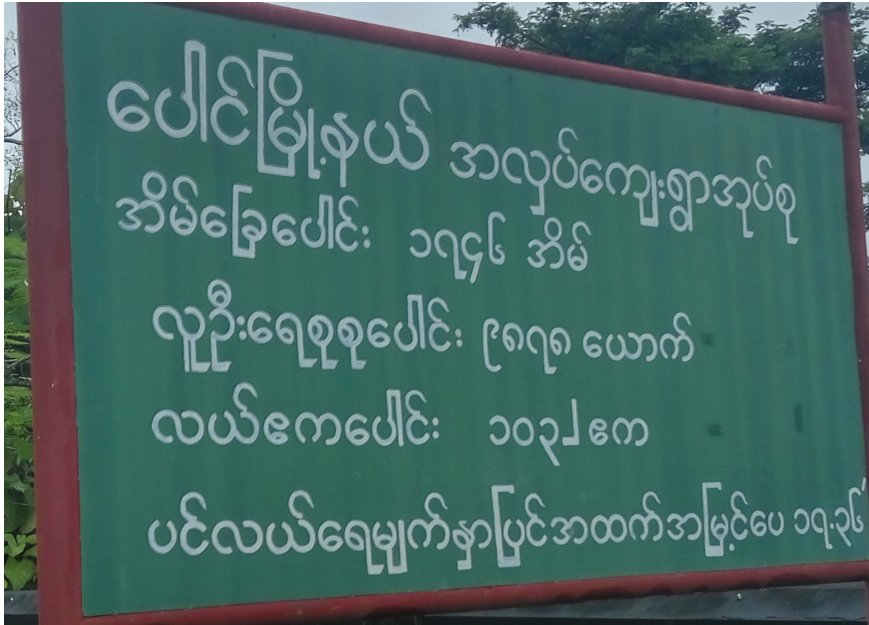
U Nay Myo Thu, an assistant officer of the Thaton District Agriculture Department explained, “In order to get the paddy seeds needed to replant the paddy on time, we have collaborated with a company to try to get it for the farmers. Additionally, we will provide the needed technical education to the farmers as well.”

According to Mon State Department of Agriculture, approximately 66,685 acres of farmland in Mon State have been submerged by flooding and 26,492 acres have been completely destroyed this year.



News

## 44 FAMILIES LEFT WITHOUT HOMES AFTER FLOODING UPSET AS GOVERNMENT HALTS RECONSTRUCTION PLANS



September 6, 2018

Locals in Ah Hlat village, Paung Township, Mon State are upset after authorities denied their requests to rebuild their destroyed homes in their original locations after flooding destroyed 44 houses and damaged another 45 between August 12–13th 2018.

“We’re not allowed to re-build our houses at the original place so we have to stay at others’ houses. After inspection, they said they would allow no construction on the original plots. They will construct new houses and give out land plots. We have to depend on donations for food. It isn’t okay if we burden others for a long time,” said Ma Su Khine, a local villager who lost her home during the recent flooding.

After losing their homes, some villagers moved to the monastery, while others stayed at their relatives’ houses.

“I want a house to live in so I can make my livelihood. My house collapsed. We, fishermen, are living hand-to-mouth. We can do nothing to [fix] what is happening to us. We just want them [the authorities] to allow us re-build our houses,” said U Kyaw Zaw Linn, a villager who also lost his house during the disaster.

Now, the fishermen who lost their homes also have difficulty in supporting their children’s education and re-establishing their livelihood.

“I have a boy in 10th grade and a girl in 5th grade. I also have a child who is in kindergarten. We are in a huge amount of trouble as we lost our house. Now we’re staying at the monastery. But we can’t stay at the monastery forever. I want them [the authorities] to let us re-build our house as soon as possible,” said U Khin Myine, another victim of the disaster.

The village administrator of Ah Hlat village, U Thein Tin, said he has filed a report regarding the 44 households who have lost their houses to the Mon State Parliament and Paung Township General Administration Department (GAD), and that the authorities are trying to rehabilitate the victims and help them to get land plot [to build their new houses on].

“We haven’t allowed them to build their [new] houses at the original places. We

banned them living in the old place, as it’s very dangerous. Now, the parliament and the township GAD have been trying to build new houses for them. We’re collecting the lists of the victims at the moment,” said the village administrator.

The authority has tried to confirm the 45 houses that were damaged during the disaster and to repair them.

“The rise in sea level is different from one year to another. This year, the waves struck the houses terribly. Fortunately, the disaster took place in daylight. If it happened at night, I’m frightened to think about the amount of damage. The disaster already came twice this year and there will be one more to come. That’s why we don’t allow them to re-build their houses there,” said U Thein Tin.

According to the locals, the sea level usually rises three times a year and floods villages.

“Only five houses were destroyed in our Khin Tan Ward. We, ourselves, made a stone wall to block the water, so our ward didn’t flood. Both disasters happened in daylight, not at night. If they had happened at night, everyone would have died. We will file a report to the parliament to make more stone walls,” said U Sein Tun, a resident of Khin Tan Ward, Ah Hlat village.

Mon State experienced heavy rains from July to August 14th 2018, and Mawlamyine, Paung, Kyaikmayaw, Bilin, Thaton, Kyaikto, Ye, and Chaungzone townships have been flooded, resulting in casualties.



## News

# MON RESIDENTS OF YE TOWNSHIP UNHAPPY OVER THE REMOVAL OF A BILLBOARD FOR MON REVOLUTION DAY



August 29, 2018

**HURFOM:** Mon residents in Ye Township are unhappy over the removal of a billboard erected in Ye Town to welcome the 71<sup>st</sup> Mon Revolution Day which was held on August 26<sup>th</sup> 2018. Two billboards with the slogan of “Revolution for Freedom” were installed in both Ye and Mudon townships of Mon State. However, after pressure from the Mon State government to remove the slogan, the Ye Township billboard was taking down.

*“We’ve used slogans with similar meanings every year. We used the word ‘Revolution’ to motivate the mood of the people. It is not to encourage rebellion or riot. They, the [Mon State] government, have also organized their Martyr’s Day freely, so we must also have the right to organize our Martyr’s Day [Mon Revolution Day] freely. There must be fairness and justice. Removing the slogan or the billboard is oppressing the ethnic people. We can’t accept this oppression,”* said activist Monk Aot Jae.

On August 18<sup>th</sup> at the Ye Township General Administration Department, the Mon State Minister of the Ministry of Security and Border Affairs, Colonel Win Nyne Oo, said the

New Mon State Party (NMSP) had signed the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and is involved in the peace process, so that it was not appropriate to use the word ‘revolution’ on the billboard.

*“What we are doing is not rebellion against [the government] and not encouraging people to conduct an uprising. Not only have Burmese [Bamar] people fought for the independence of this country. We, the Mon people, were also heavily involved in the fight for independence. Every leader has tried so hard, and now we have signed the NCA. They are revolutionary leaders and the day we honor them has become Revolution Day. We aren’t crazy and violent. This is just the usage of Mon literature,”* said Nai Myint Tun, the chairperson of the committee organizing the Mon Revolution Day in Ye Township.

The organizing committee was informed by the Burma Army that the word ‘revolution’ could lead to a riot. Thus, Military Operation Command #19 called Nai Myint Tun and the Ye GAD and forced them to remove the billboard. However, they denied the order.

On August 21<sup>st</sup>, the Ye Township GAD called Nai Myint Tun three times and threatened to charge them under Municipal Law if they refused to remove the billboard. Therefore, the organizing committee removed the billboard at 09:00 pm on that day.

*“Mon Revolution Day is a special day for us and we have tried to organize an event. But our expectations have not been met as planned, as we have had to remove our billboard. We’re unhappy. Now people have been worrying about whether the event should take place or not,”* said young activist Min Nay Lin Tun.

The organizing committee decided to move the event to Do Moke Brat, a religious site in Sone Nathar village, Ye Township.

*“Ethnic rights are just on paper. There is nearly no ethnic rights in reality,”* said Mehm Bnyair Hongsar, another member of the organizing committee.

Mon State Chief Minister Dr. Aye Zan met and discussed the slogan issue with officials from the NMSP and asked them if they would lead the event.

*“Only civilians [and civil society] have organized the event. The NMSP hasn’t played a leading role in organizing it. The way we [NMSP] would organize the event and the way the people do are different. When it was sure that we were not involved in organizing the event, the Chief Minister requested us to persuade the people to remove the word [r]volution from the billboard. We replied we would try our best, but we couldn’t promise anything,”* said Nai Hongsar Bon Khine, a member of the NMSP Central Executive Committee.

Nai Hongsar Bon Khine also advised that every party should avoid using controversial words in order to avoid misunderstandings between each other.

News

# JOURNALISTS AND CSOS PROTEST UNFAIR RULING ON 2 JOURNALISTS IN MAWLAMYINE CITING GOVERNMENT OPPRESSION OF MEDIA FREEDOM



September 19, 2018

**HURFOM:** On September 3<sup>rd</sup>, two Reuters journalists were sentenced to seven years in jail for breaching the “Official Secrets Act”. Despite journalistic protection under the 2014 “News Media Law, the two journalists were charged under the colonial era “Official Secret Act” and sentenced to long-term imprisonment.

Journalists and civil society organizations (CSOs) in Mon and Karen states have seen the imprisonment of the two journalists as an attack on media freedom, and organized a street protest on September 7<sup>th</sup> 2018.

*“Regarding the imprisonment of the two journalists, it’s not just that two journalists were jailed. It’s a threat to the media. That’s why we organized this protest,”* said Nyan Soe Win, a journalist from The Irrawaddy, who led the protest.

The protesters demanded the release of the two convicted journalists, that government immediately stop the oppression of the media, and to have free access to information.

U Ko Ko Zaw, the Chief Editor of the *Than Lwin Times Journal*, said, *“Journalists must be charged under the media laws. Media laws are the laws approved by the state. But they didn’t use the media laws and used oppressive laws to manipulate the situation. And the imprisonment of the journalists is a threat to the whole media world.”*

U Ko Ko Zaw continued that freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are already approved by the constitution.

*“According to the constitution, there are rights to freedom of expression and rights to information. Those rights are officially approved by the constitution. But [the court] neglected the constitution and imprisoned the journalists. This is a big challenge for all*

*journalists and a worrying situation for the media,”* continued U Ko Ko Zaw.

According to Nyan Soe Win, the Myanmar News Media Law states that everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression, and that right shall include freedom to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any other media of his choice.

*“Media freedom was blackened when journalists were sentenced to jail on a charge of breaching the “Official Secrets Act”. Right to information and media freedom are vital to a democratic society. Myanmar can’t be a successful democratic country if there is no media freedom,”* said Nyan Soe Win.

More than 70 participants made up of journalists and members CSOs in Mon and Karen state contributed to the protest.

## Information on HURFOM and Invitation for Feedbacks from Readers

Dear Readers,

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) was founded in 1995, by a group of young Mon people. The main objectives of HURFOM are:

- ☐ Monitoring the human rights situation in Mon territory and other areas in southern Burma
- ☐ Protecting and promoting internationally recognized human rights in Burma,

In order to implement these objectives, HURFOM produces the monthly "Mon Forum" newsletters. If publication is delayed it is because we are waiting to confirm information, and it comes with our heartfelt apologies.

We encourage you to write to us if you have feedback or if you know someone who you think would like to receive the newsletter.

Please email or mail a name and address to:

HURFOM, P.O. Box 35, Sangkhalburi Post Office,

Kanchanaburi, 71240 Thailand

E-mail: [info@rehmonnya.org](mailto:info@rehmonnya.org)

Website: <http://www.rehmonnya.org>

With regards,

Director

Human Rights Foundation of Monland

## 850 DENGUE FEVER CASES AND 3 DEATHS IN MON STATE SINCE START OF RAINY SEASON

July 23, 2018

**WCRP:** In 2018, ten townships in Mon State have reported 850 cases of dengue fever during the rainy season so far, and three children have died of the illness, according to the Mon State Public Health Department.

The three children who died of dengue fever are a nine-year-old from Thanbyuzayat Township, an eight-month-old from Paung Township, and a 16-year-old from Thaton Township.

*"The number of dengue cases has rather declined this year. By this time last year, we had had more than 10,000 dengue patients. But only one patient died of the illness last year. We have had three deaths this year. The mortality rate has increased this year,"* said Dr. Sithu Ye Naung, the Deputy Director of the Mon State Public Health Department.

Among the ten townships, Mawlamyine and Ye have had the highest numbers of dengue cases. Most of the sufferers have been children between five and nine years old. From January to July of 2017, there were 10,073 dengue cases and one child died of the illness. By June of that year, over **500 cases of children with dengue** had been reported. There were also high numbers of dengue cases and deaths in 2011, 2013, and 2015.

*"Not only children but also adults have suffered from dengue. About ten patients are being admitted to Mawlamyine General Hospital every day,"* said Dr. Sithu Ye Naung.

There are dengue fever outbreaks about every two or three years in Mon State. Normally, Mon State detects dengue fever earlier than other states and divisions in Burma. Governmental departments, community-based organizations, the Public Health

Department, and the people all have a responsibility to control dengue fever, according to a statement by the National Malaria Control Center in Naypyidaw.

*"School-aged children have a high risk of dengue. Children between five and nine years old have the highest rate of dengue fever, and those between one and four years have the second-highest rate. So primary schools are our first priority when we use insecticides to kill mosquito larvae,"* said the doctor.

After cooperating with Township Public Health Departments and Township General Hospitals, the Public Health Department has made a list of all dengue patients who have been admitted to the local hospitals.

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# MON STATE GOVERNMENT DISCOURAGES SUPPORT OF LOCAL FOR NMSP AFTER SIGNING NCA



September 25, 2018

**HURFOM:** The Mon State Government has restricted activities related to Mon Affairs after the New Mon State Party (NMSP) signed the National Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) early this year, according to report.

*"Even when the NMSP hadn't signed the NCA, we went to the NMSP military training and gave our support. Now, after the NCA, [the Minister of the Mon State Ministry of Security and Border Affairs] gave us a warning [about supporting the NMSP military training]. It's unacceptable. [Anyhow], I've already decided to support Mon affairs in the future,"* said Mon Activist Monk Aot Jae.

continues that their support for the military training was not at the request of the NMSP or other organizations. They decided to support the [NMSP] training on their own because they think they should do so.

Monk Aot Jae and his team went to the military training of the NMSP at Ye ChaungPhyar Region of Southeast Ye Township, Mon State on September 4<sup>th</sup> 2018 and on September 10<sup>th</sup>. According to instructions from the Mon State government, the chief of the Department of Religious Affairs in Chaungzone and his team visited Monk Aot Jae's monastery and gave him a warning.

*"The chief of the Chaungzone Department of Religious Affairs said the [Mon State] Minister of the Ministry of Security and Border Affairs did not like that we supported the [NMSP] military training. Now, even the NMSP signed the NCA, there was no genuine peace between the two parties – the NMSP and the Burmese military. That's why the minister instructed them to warn us that he didn't want us to support the NMSP,"* said Monk Aot Jae.

According to the reports, Monk Aot Jae and his team did not support only the NMSP's military training. They supported flood and fire victims, the Mon National Schools, and the Mon students and they also donated blood.

*"After the NCA, we think we have the right to be involved in the peace process. So we decided to support [the NMSP's military training]. We assumed that it's our national affair,"* said the Monk.

If there was a restriction on supporting the Mon national affairs, the number of Mon activists who did support would decline in the future, said NaiJelToiNai, a member of Monk Aot Jae's Team.

*"Before the NCA, together with U ZinZawLatt[Monk Aot Jae], we went to the NMSP's military training and their Department of Education and supported them very often. Last year, we went to the NMSP's [controlled areas] three times. No one checked us. Even the [military] check points didn't inquire about us. But after the NCA, there was no freedom. I feel that there has been a restriction imposed upon us,"* said NaiJelToiNai.

After signing the NCA, the NMSP has joined the Union Joint Monitoring Committee (UJMC); however, the party has been not involved in the Mon State Joint Monitoring Committee as they failed to get an agreement with the military.

Similarly, the Mon State government instructed townships to **remove the billboards** with Mon revolutionary slogans for Mon Revolution Day.

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