



- To monitor human rights situations in Mon territory and other areas southern part of Burma
- To protect and promote internationally recognized human rights in Burma

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Press Release

August 15, 2011

Burma's Navy Attack on Civilians' Livelihood

A Report on Land Confiscation and Human Rights Violations on Kywe Thone Nyi Ma Island, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division

By Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) - Burma

Although Burma's new supposedly civilian-led government has been in power since March 2011, human rights violations and abuses are still committed by the troops of Burmese Army, which receive backing from the current ruling party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP). Because the president, U Thein Sein, a former military general, does not have control over local military battalions or commands, a change in government makes little difference towards stopping the land confiscations by the USDP's proxy business companies and the Burmese Army (*tatmadaw*). Villagers' land has continued to be seized without compensation in Mon State, Karen State, and Tenasserim Division which covers the southern part of Burma.

Since early December 2010, Burmese Navy Unit No. 43, under the command of Ka Dike-based government navy regional command head quarters, began to confiscate the rubber plantations and household plots of villagers on Kywe Thone Nyi Ma Island, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division.

Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM) has documented over 1,000 acres of farmers' land confiscated on Kywe Thone Nyi Ma Island. However, HURFOM found that Navy Unit No. 43 has also surveyed and marked out a total of another 3,000 acres of rubber plantations belonging to the residents of Kywe Thone Nyi Ma Island and the easterly neighboring villages across the water in Yebyu Township.

Officials from Navy Unit No. 43 explained that the land seized would be used for military training grounds and construction of army barracks. Land was confiscated from around 240 rubber plantation owners without compensation, and a decree was issued banning these landowners from further cultivating or entering their acreage and plots.

As a result of the land confiscation, there are a number of negative socio-economic negative impacts to the local people:

- The local Mon farmers have suddenly lost their traditional form of livelihood and have no available income for food and housing materials.
- The families of farmers who lost their land can no longer afford health care and cannot support sending their children to school.
- Many families have migrated to Thailand to work as cheap labor.
- The remaining families on Kywe Thone Nyi Ma Island live with the daily perils of being forced to work or porter for the military and pay extortionist taxes to support the Navy's presence on the island.

Recently, at the end of 2010, the Zaykabar Company, led by Dr. U Khin Shwe, confiscated 800 acres in Kyaikmayaw Township, Mon State. After the villagers wrote a letter complaining to the government in Nay Pyi Daw (the capital of Burma), Zaykabar offered compensation – but at an unfairly low rate. It was not enough to save the Mon farmers who had lost nearly everything.

Mon people have hoped that after the formation of the new civilian-led government, that purports to be a democracy, the situation of human rights abuses in Mon communities would improve and their livelihoods would be protected. But in reality, it has been getting worse.

Therefore, on behalf of farmers who have no voice in the entire lower part of Burma, HURFOM calls on the following groups and individuals to act:

1. USDP government, led by President U Thein Sein, must gain control and instruct the local Burmese Army, Navy, and other *tatmadaw* forces to stop confiscating the lands belonged to the farmers.
2. Mon State government and Mon political party, All Mon Region Democracy Party (AMRDP), must seek justice for the victims of land confiscation and protect them from future exploitation.
3. Tomas Ojea Quintana, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, must get involved in the investigation on land confiscation and on how the military has robbed civilians of their livelihood.

Attacks on civilians' livelihoods, like the seizing of land on Kywe Thone Nyi Ma Island, could prolong conflict between the central government and ethnic minorities in the region concerned. As long as the military continues to unlawfully take land and property from Mon communities without compensation, there will not be a stable peace.

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