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MYANMAR ARMY ATTACKS ON KACHIN CIVILIANS MUST END

Since Jan. 25, the Myanmar Army has been engaged in an aerial bombardment of Kachin State's Tanai Township, and carried out military strikes in and occupation of Kachin Independence Army-held areas of Sumprabum and Waingmaw townships. Shelling has displaced estimates of more than 3,000 civilians. Unable to flee, these villagers have been effectively trapped in the conflict zone. At least four have been killed, according to local media.

While community-based organizations have negotiated the release of many of these individuals, Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) remains concerned by reports that the Tatmadaw continues to detain locals while releasing 1,000 migrant workers who had been employed in the mines of the resource-rich region.

Sources on the ground tell BHRN that hundreds of villagers—some of whom are being displaced by armed conflict for the third time—have been stranded on roads for more than 10 days, and are now suffering from health issues including chronic diarrhea and lack food and water.

BHRN stands with Kachin organizations calling for the protection of these communities, and condemns the Myanmar Army for its targeting of civilians and reported use of IDPs as human shields in military advances toward KIA outposts. Of note is that these attacks continued while peace talks with the KIA were being held in China.

"We can see that the intentions of the military are not to achieve peace, but to force ethnic minorities into total submission," said Kyaw Win, BHRN's executive director. "The future of the Kachin people is at severe risk."

BHRN calls on the Myanmar government to commit to sincere political dialogue with armed groups instead of deploying troops to northern Myanmar during the peace process. The international community must provide coordinated relief to areas for which aid has been blocked, and in its relations with Myanmar, prioritise the alleviation of suffering of those displaced by the ongoing civil war.

Note for Editors

Conflict in Kachin State was renewed in 2011 with the breakdown of a 17-year bilateral ceasefire between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Myanmar military, also known as the Tatmadaw. Since then, 120,000 people have been displaced and more than 350 villages destroyed by armed conflict. The Tatmadaw says it launched the current strikes in gold- and amber-rich Tanai as a way to cut off a KIA source of income and protect Myanmar's natural resources; the KIA describes the recent offensives as an attempt at a territorial grab. The KIA and its allies are not signatories to Myanmar's Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, whose terms they say are dictated by the undemocratic and military-drafted 2008 Constitution.



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Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) works for human rights, minority rights and religious freedom in Burma. BHRN has played a crucial role advocating for human rights and religious freedom with politicians and world leaders.

Media Enquiries

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