

URGENT RELEASE: HUMANITARIAN CRISIS UPDATE FOR KACHIN STATE AND NORTHERN SHAN STATE

It has been more than 30 months since armed clashes between the Myanmar government armed forces and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) forces were first rekindled in 2011, resulting in more than 120,000 IDPs.

Despite the ongoing peace negotiations, skirmishes between the Myanmar government armed forces and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) have been increasing.

Government deployed more armed troops to the current conflict area based on the census data collection period and it has increased tension between two armed groups. Fighting between the Myanmar government army and the KIA broke out on 10th April 2014 close to Man Win Gyi, southern Kachin State. Recent, Thursday's fighting comes less than 48 hours after a KIO delegation took part in joint talks in Yangon involving government officials and the KIO's fellow representatives from the National Ceasefire Coordination Team (NCCT). The fighting has affected several villages in the area, which is located on the borders between Kachin State, northern Shan State, and China. Four camps are located in close vicinity to the fighting: Man Wing Gyi Catholic Church and Man Wing Gyi Baptist Church (approx. 2,700 people), Lagat Yang (over 800 people), and Hka Hkye Zup (approx. 190 people). Many of these people have been forced to run away from their camps. IDPs in these locations had already been displaced during fighting in November 2013. This will be the third displacement for some of them.

Under this situation which threatens IDPs lives and security and hampers the peace process, **the undersigning organizations, (the Joint Strategy Team), are actively responding to the urgent needs of IDPs and their safety and security**, with additional support from UNHCR and international organizations, and want to deliver the following **urgent key messages** to all stakeholders are:

1. **We urge for an immediate cessation of hostilities:** A peaceful solution to the conflicts in Myanmar is a critical priority for the future of the country and its people. Both parties should not violate agreements that have been reached previously and they must implement the agreements immediately.
2. **We call for full respect for the international humanitarian law and human rights laws.** All parties to the conflict (the Myanmar government armed forces and the KIA) should respect the rights of civilians, and observe the principles of distinction between civilians and combatants and take precaution in the case of attacks to avoid civilian victims. As well as ensuring that civilians are not exposed to any "violence to life and person, cruel treatment and torture, outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment."
3. **Protection and safety of the internally displaced persons is an urgent concern.** The children and IDPs themselves will have been traumatised by recent experiences. All stakeholders should ensure that IDPs' protection needs and concerns are addressed.
4. **We urge the People's Republic of China government to respect the**

principle of “non refoulement”¹, as stated by International humanitarian law, as well as refugee law and refugees’ rights.

5. **We call upon all international and national humanitarian organisations and the donor community to provide the urgently needed humanitarian assistance and advocacy support.** Noting that the displaced persons have the following immediate humanitarian needs: protection and safe arrival to other IDP camps; access to foodstuffs, shelter and non-food items (e.g., blankets and warm clothes). These IDPs are seeking safety and have no other resources with them.

The facts: The above messages are based on the following facts which are provoking this dramatic situation:

The Government Army conducted multiple attacks in the Nawng Luk, Nawng Lum, Lahkum Pa, Nam Hka, Lagat Daw, Gawng Ngu Yang, Nam Hee and Kyawk Hpya areas in Mansi Township during these few days. The attacks reached less than 1 kilometer from the Lagat Yang IDP camp, driving over 800 IDPs away while over 2,000 Shan, Kachin and Palaung villagers fled to the China border. Over 200 IDPs from Lagat Yang camp and over 2,000 of villagers from Bang Glam, Nam Hi, Na Lung, Nawng Jun, Nawng Luk and others surrounding villages (from 24 villages) stayed at Shan Buddhist temple, relatives home and public space of Kachin village at Nawng Dao village in China. Heavy bombing machine shot by Government army shield reached to near the Lagat Yang Camp. Provoking more than 1,400 IDPs.

By today (14 April 2014), the situation along the border line in China side is still chaotic. People’s Republic of China authorities, allowed some IDPs to enter into China as the fighting intensified. The refugees fled from Hka Hkye camp to Lung Krawk, across the river in China side. Chinese soldiers are guarding the camp at all time.

Refugees from Shan villages are desperate because they could not finish their sugarcane harvesting. Most of the villagers in this area are depending on sugarcane plantations for their livelihood.

14 April 2014; Yangon, Myanmar

BRIDGE, Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), Kachin Relief and Development Committee (KRDC), Kachin Women Association (KWA), Kachin Development Group (KDG), Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS), Metta Development Foundation, Shalom Foundation and Wunpawng Ninghtoi (WPN)

¹ The principle of non-refoulement, states that those seeking refugee should not be sent back to the country they are escaping from, due to persecution or threat to their lives