



Website: www.shanhumanrights.org

Email: shanhumanrights@gmail.com

Phone: + 66 (0) 93-297-7754

Update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

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Indiscriminate Burma Army shelling near SSPP/SSA headquarters endangers thousands of villagers

On August 7, 2015, while critical nationwide ceasefire talks were taking place in Yangon, the Burma Army fired mortar shells towards the headquarters of the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) in Ke See township, endangering over 3,700 civilians in eight villages.

Five 120 mm shells were fired from the Burma Army base at Kiu Mawk Kao, about 8 kms south of the SSPP/SSA headquarters at Wan Hai. The shells landed close to the villages of Wan Parng Nar Nawng, Wan Nam Lin Long and Wan Nawng Hee, east of Wan Hai. Fortunately no one was injured, but villagers were terrified, as they had not experienced shelling so close to their homes since the large-scale Burma Army offensive against the SSPP/SSA in 2011.

The shelling occurred after a clash broke out earlier in the day between Burma Army and SSPP/SSA troops, about 20 kms south of Wan Hai. A convoy of Burmese troops had run into a patrol of SSPP/SSA troops crossing a road, and both sides had opened fire.

Although the clash was spontaneous, and should have been resolved by commanding officers of the respective sides, the Burma Army retaliated by firing shells towards the SSPP/SSA headquarters, in the opposite direction of where the clash had taken place.

SHRF deplors this aggressive act by the Burma Army, which directly endangered the lives of thousands of civilians.

Since the SSPP/SSA renewed its ceasefire with the Burmese government in January 2012, it has suffered repeated offensives by the Burma Army, which has surrounded and attempted to isolate the SSPP/SSA headquarter area. Currently, there are at least 17 Burma Army battalions surrounding the Wan Hai area.

SHRF urges the Burma Army to adhere to its ceasefire commitments, and reiterates our calls for the Burmese government to show its sincerity towards the peace process by immediately stopping its military build-up and offensives, and pulling back its troops from the conflict areas.

For further information, please contact

Sai Hor Hseng +66 (0) 62- 941-9600 (English, Shan)

Sai Kheun Mai +66 (0) 94-638-6759 (English, Burmese)

Burma Army shelling of SSPP/SSA headquarter area on August 7, 2015

