

Burma's regime breaks ceasefires in Kachin State

In Kachin State, over 16,000 refugees have fled escalating fighting and systematic sexual violence in Kachin State and have been sheltering in makeshift camps along the China-Burma border and are urgently in need of aid, according to the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT). Villagers suspected of supporting the Kachin Independence Army have been tortured severely. Two community leaders had their ears cut off. Another four men were put in sacks, beaten and then drowned in the Shweli River.

Under the new 2008 Constitution, the Burmese Army is the only permitted armed organisation allowed in the country. Armed ethnic organisations with ceasefire agreements took part in the National Convention, which drafted the principles of the Constitution. Every single one of their proposals which would grant some level of autonomy to ethnic states, and protection for ethnic rights and culture, were rejected by the dictatorship. Instead they were told to join the Burmese Army or face military attack.



Kachin villagers flee the fighting

The armed ethnic organisations are prepared to negotiate for political solutions, but the dictatorship refuses to enter into genuine dialogue. As the regime breaks ceasefire after ceasefire, there is a real danger a major humanitarian crisis and a massive escalation in human rights abuses against civilians, as the Burmese Army targets civilians in conflict.

Regime threatens NLD

At the end of June, the state-owned New Light of Myanmar published two articles attacking Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD).

The articles accused the NLD of operating illegally as it is no longer a registered political party and said they should "end all political activity". There was also a thinly veiled threat to Aung San Suu Kyi and her party members, warning that; "We are deeply concerned that if Daw Aung San Suu Kyi makes trips to the countryside regions, there may be chaos and riots, as evidenced by previous incidents."

This language is very similar to language used by the dictatorship before the Depayin Massacre on 30th May 2003, when regime thugs attempted to assassinate Aung San Suu Kyi, and at least 70 of

her supporters were beaten to death. Aung San Suu Kyi was then arrested and detained until 13th November 2010.

The threats highlight how nothing has really changed in Burma. However, the UN Secretary General is still clinging to his 'wait and see' policy on Burma. While Ban Ki-moon fails to act, Burma is sliding into large-scale civil war, human rights abuses are increasing, and Aung San Suu Kyi's supporters are being threatened with violence and prosecution.

He should instead appoint a new UN envoy to Burma without delay, and work to secure dialogue between the dictatorship, the democracy movement, and genuine ethnic representatives.

Burma remains world's second largest opium producer

In its 2011 World Drug Report, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said that opium production in Burma rose sharply and that Burma remained the world's second largest producer of opium. The report also stated the area for opium poppy cultivation increased from 31,700 hectares in 2009 to 38,100 hectares in 2010 and that Burma was the largest producer of amphetamine-type stimulants in Southeast Asia.

Burma is world's fifth-highest producer of refugees

In June, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) released its annual "Global Trends" report for 2010, which found Burma was the world's fifth-largest source country for refugees in 2010 with 415,700 refugees under the UNHCR's mandate, more than Sudan or Colombia.

ILO: "no substantive progress" on forced labour

In June, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) said that forced labour complaints in Burma had dramatically increased. The ILO received 506 forced labour complaints since the start of 2010 - more than double the number of complaints received in the previous three years. While some of this increase is attributed to the ILO's awareness raising on the issue of forced labour, the ILO's Liaison Officer in Rangoon, Steve Marshall, said that the number of complaints did not reflect the true magnitude of forced labor in the country because many people were still unaware of their rights.

The International Labour Conference in June concluded that there had been "no substantive progress" towards compliance with the 1998 ILO Commission of Inquiry's recommendations on forced labour in Burma.

EU sends delegation to Burma

A European Union delegation, led by Robert Cooper, Counsellor in the European External Action Service, conducted a fact-finding mission to Burma in June.

During the visit, the EU delegation met members of the government, including First Vice President Tin Aung Myint Oo, Foreign Minister Wunna Maung Lwin. The EU delegation also met Aung San Suu Kyi and members of the National League for Democracy (NLD).

Burma Campaign UK cautioned that for more effective dialogue, the EU should send higher level representatives and set clear benchmarks with a timeframe for change.

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