



**Update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation**

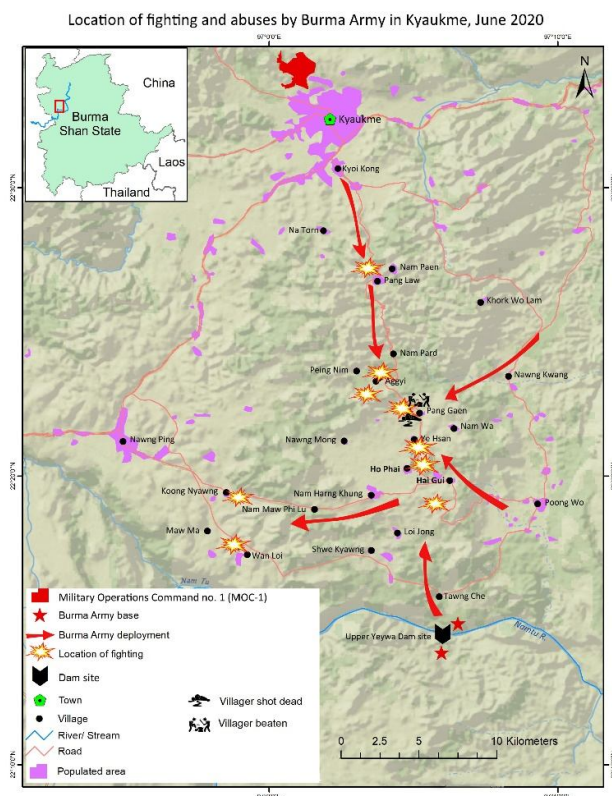
April 12, 2021

**France's Razel-Bec should follow EDF's lead and end controversial dam project in Shan State**

On March 19, 2021, France's state-owned Electricite de France (EDF), revealed it was suspending development of the Shweli 3 dam project in northern Shan State, due to human rights concerns after the February 1 military coup.

SHRF welcomes EDF's decision, and urges the French engineering company Razel-Bec (part of the Fayat Group) to follow suit and immediately withdraw from the controversial Upper Yeywa dam project on the Myitnge/Namtu river in northern Shan State.

Shan civil society groups are strongly opposed to the building of the Upper Yeywa dam, which was started by the military regime in 2008, without local consultation or consent. The reservoir of the 280 megawatt dam will stretch for 60 kilometers up to Hsipaw town, submerging centuries-old Shan communities and fertile farmlands. The dam-site lies in an active conflict zone, and Burma Army troops guarding the site have committed gross human rights violations against local villagers, including extrajudicial killing, torture and use of human shields. The Upper Yeywa dam is being financed by a loan from the Export-Import Bank of China.



Shan community groups have repeatedly urged foreign companies involved in the dam to divest or risk complicity in the military's human rights violations. After SHRF issued a report on July 9, 2020, "Extrajudicial killing, torture by Burma Army during operation against RCSS/SSA near Upper Yeywa dam site in Kyaukme," the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, an international watchdog, wrote to all the companies involved, but only Swiss company Stucky replied, saying it was no longer involved in the project. The other companies, including IPGRB (Razel-Bec's joint venture in Burma), did not reply.

IPGRB is a joint venture between Razel-Bec and the International Power Group

Public Company Ltd. (IPG). IPG is a subsidiary of International Group of Entrepreneurs (IGE), one of the leading business conglomerates in Burma, set up by the sons of former Burmese military general Aung Thaung, who was sanctioned by the US Treasury Department in October 2014, for “undermining the positive political and economic transition in Burma,” and “perpetuating violence, oppression, and corruption.” IGE is the local partner of Chinese and Thai companies planning three giant dams on the Salween River in Shan and Karen State, strongly opposed by local communities (the Naung Pha, Mong Ton and Hatgyi dams).

IPGRB appears to be the main foreign company now on the ground at the Upper Yeywa dam-site. The current Google satellite image of the site labels it as “IPGRB BASE CAMP.”

Google satellite image of Upper Yeywa dam-site with "IPGRB BASE CAMP" label



Since the military coup on February 1, anti-coup protests have taken place in towns near the Upper Yeywa dam site, including Kyaukme and Hsipaw. On February 17, workers from the Upper Yeywa dam site joined the protests in Kyaukme, holding a banner saying “Upper Yeywa Hydropower Project Civil Disobedience Movement.” They were not seen joining any public protests after this date, but the sound of pot-banging in support of the CDM movement has been heard from the dam site in the evenings. Construction work at the dam site appears to have almost completely stopped.



CDM protest in Kyaukme town on February 17, 2021



No visible work activity at Upper Yeywa dam site, April 3, 2021



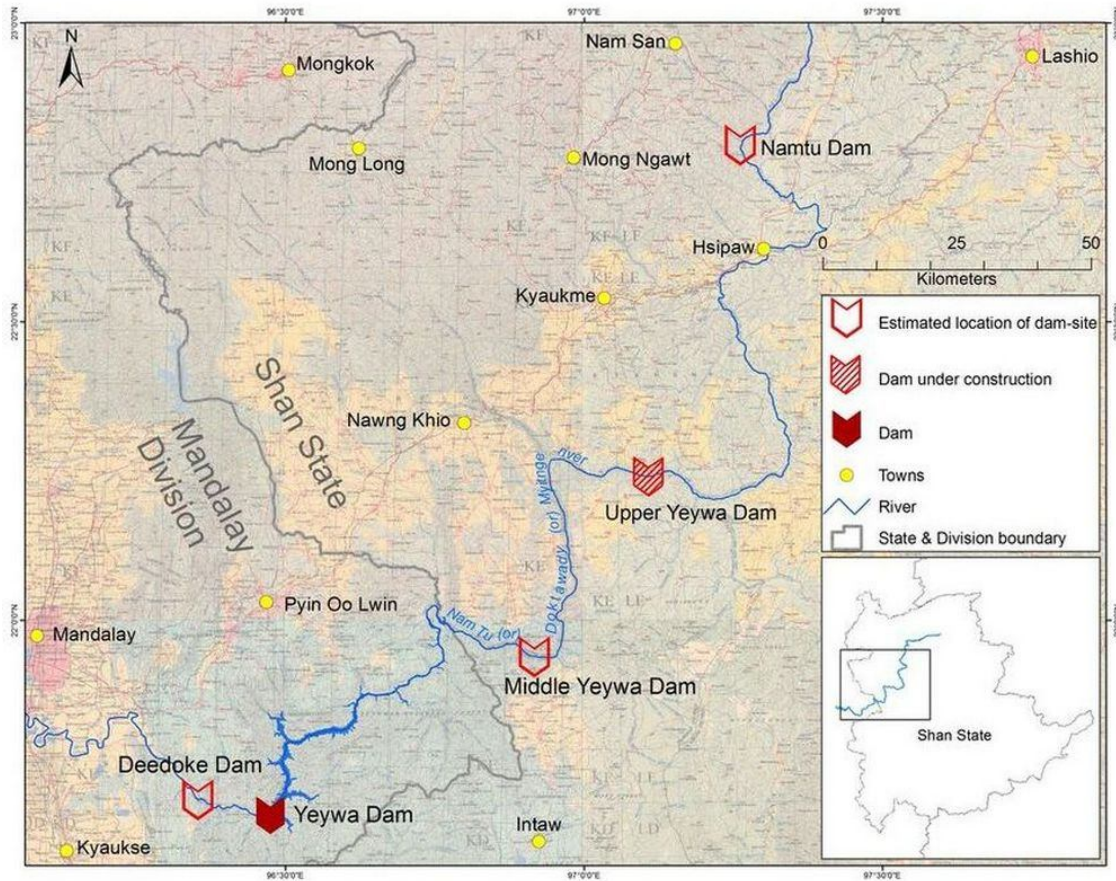
In the past few weeks, atrocities by the regime’s security forces have mounted, both against unarmed protesters in urban areas, and against villagers in conflict areas, who have been killed by aerial bombing.

EDF cited its obligations to international human rights principles as the reason for suspending its dam project. This begs the question whether Razel-Bec adheres to the same principles.

From the outset, Razel-Bec should never have cooperated with a military crony company to build a dam in war-torn Shan State against the wishes of local communities, and should never have ignored the gross human rights violations by security forces guarding its worksite.

It is time now for Razel-Bec to stop siding with the murderous Burmese military regime, and to take a principled stand. We urge Razel-Bec to immediately pull out of the Upper Yeywa dam project.

Existing and planned dams on the mainstream Namtu/Myitnge River



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