



KACHIN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION THAILAN
P.O.BOX 415, CHIANG MAI 50000, THAILAND

Date: 3rd September, 2020

“Guarding profits not lives”: New report exposes Burma Army role in deadly Gwihka landslide

A new report by the Kachin Women’s Association Thailand (KWAT) places blame on Burma Army troops for failing to enforce safety regulations at the Gwihka Mine in Hpakant, which could have prevented the deaths of about 300 jade scavengers in the landslide on July 2, 2020.

The Gwihka Mine, like the rest of the Hpakant jade mining area, is under tight control of the Burma Army, who are tasked with securing the mines. Despite clear signs of instability, these troops did nothing to prevent companies from large-scale digging at the Gwihka Mine until its rainy season closure on June 25, and did not cordon off the mine to scavengers after this date.

The report exposes how the troops had no incentive to block off the mine -- not just because of the military’s links to companies involved, but because they were earning large profits from the “taxing” of the jade scavengers.

It is little known that the hundreds of thousands of scavengers in Hpakant must hand over to the military a share in cash from all jade found -- providing a substantial source of revenue for the Burma Army, shared up to the highest levels.

The troops securing the Gwihka Mine at the time of the disaster were from the elite mobile Light Infantry Division 33, notorious for atrocities committed in northern Rakhine State in 2017.

“How could troops who have killed and raped civilians with impunity, be expected to protect the lives of jade miners?” said KWAT spokesperson, Moon Nay Li.

The report critiques the token, non-transparent response of the government to the disaster, and analyzes that attempts to improve regulation of the mining industry will fail while the Burma Army remains all powerful, with their own troops guarding the mining sites.

The report calls for a moratorium on all mechanized mining and other large-scale resource extraction projects until there is genuine peace and devolution of power under a new federal constitution -- giving local people control of their lands and natural resources.

Please download full report at <https://kachinwomen.com/?p=1272>

Contact information,

Email; kwat.office@gmail.com

Phone: +66 897559892