

Updates archive: <http://www.burmalink.org/peace-conflict-updates/>

## ACRONYM DICTIONARY

AA	Arakan Army
ANC	Arakan National Council
BA	Burma Army (Tatmadaw)
BGF	Border Guard Forces (under BA command)
BHRN	Burma Human Rights Network
DKBA	Democratic Karen Benevolent Army
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CNF	Chin National Front
DASSK	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
DPN	Delegation for Political Dialogue (negotiating body of the UNFC)
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation
FBR	Free Burma Rangers
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KBC	Karen Baptist Convention
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army, armed wing of the KNU
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
KNU	Karen National Union
KIA	Kachin Independence Army, armed wing of the KIO
KIO	Kachin Independence organisation
KORD	Karen Organisation for Relief and Development
KWO	Karen Women's Organisation
LDU	Lahu Democratic Union
MNDAA	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
MNLA	Mon National Liberation Army, armed wing of the NMSP
NA-B	Northern Alliance-Burma (made up of KIA, TNLA, MNDAA, and AA)
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (in name only, not inclusive and not nationwide)
NLD	National League for Democracy
NMSP	New Mon State Party
PSLF/TNLA	Palaung State Liberation Front/ Ta'ang National Liberation Army
RSCC/SSA	Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (South)
SHRF	Shan Human Rights Foundation
SSPP/SSA	Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (North)
UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
UPC	Union Peace Conference
UWSA	United Wa State Army
WNO	Wa National Organisation
21CPC	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Peace Conference

For more acronyms, go to <http://www.burmalink.org/background/acronym-dictionary/>.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

- BHRN released a statement noting that evidence supports a prima facie case against the State of Burma for war crimes in Kachin State and crimes against humanity in Arakan State.

Updates archive: <http://www.burmalink.org/peace-conflict-updates/>

- The UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution to urgently dispatch an international fact-finding mission to look into gross human rights violations in Arakan State.
- Attack by MNDAA and armed conflict between the BA and MNDAA resulted in deaths of dozens of BA soldiers as well as police officers and civilians. Over 20,000 civilians fled to China.
- After one year in power, many have been disappointed in the NLD-led Government. The peace process has stagnated, political and economic reforms have stalled, and violations by the BA continue.
- Marking the International Day of Action for Rivers, ethnic communities around Burma rallied against dams threatening their cultures, livelihoods, and environments.
- Misunderstandings between DASSK and EAOs about the NCA signing took place as DASSK announced that KIO will sign the NCA, followed by KIO rebutting the claim. DASSK then announced that five UNFC members have confirmed to sign, followed by these members stating nothing had been confirmed.
- Recent developments are, however, signalling changes in the ethnic alliances. KIO, a leading UNFC member, is part of a northern block calling for a new peace process outside of the NCA. The position of several other non-signatory UNFC groups is not confirmed but there are signals that they might sign the NCA and change their policy of all-inclusiveness.
- Many analysts and observers are concerned as they insist that all-inclusiveness is the only path towards genuine and lasting peace.
- Over 20,000 people in Moulmein participated in a protest against the parliamentary decision to name a bridge in the state after Bogyoke Aung San against the people's wishes.

## **INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION FOR RIVERS – MARCH 14**

- Communities gathered to oppose plans to build large dams in Burma's conflict-affected ethnic communities. Demonstrations took place across Kachin, Shan, Karen, and Karenni states, calling for a complete and immediate moratorium on the proposed projects as the anticipated impacts would be environmentally and culturally devastating.
- Shan CSOs called for an immediate halt to construction of the Upper Yeywa dam and other hydropower projects on the Namtu river. Their report cites ongoing conflict, serious environmental and social impacts and lack of informed consent of impacted villagers as key reasons for stopping these projects.
- *"We are against the dams because we have seen that there is no benefit for our people, especially the people who live near the Salween River,"* said Saw Htoo Htoo Stin, president of

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the Karen Student Network Group. *"If they build the dams, all of our villages and our beautiful mountains and forests will be destroyed, they will be underwater."* [Read the full article by Leena Zieger, Founder and International Coordinator of Burma Link on DVB.](#)

## **KNU CONGRESS**

- KNU Congress, held every four years, began on March 14 in the Karen State.
- Numerous international Karen organizations are attending the congress, but have been denied vote following a decision by the KNU Executive Committee to repeal their voting rights.
- The KNU has been reviewing the past four years and outlined the KNU's basic principles and department hierarchy. Two new committees on land and human rights were added, and the congress voted to increase the number of women involved in all administrative and government levels, as well as in the central committee.
- The current chair, Gen Saw Mutu Say Poe will run for re-election. Saw Mutu Say Poe's motives and close relations with the BA have been questioned by many observers and Karen civil society who have witnessed KNU leaders getting richer whilst Karen civilians have seen little improvement on the ground.
- The elections for KNU leadership are crucial as the result will determine which faction of the KNU will lead the peace process. The KNU is one of eight EAOs to have signed the NCA.

## **DISPLACEMENT**

### ***Refugees in Thailand***

- Suicide attempt rates have risen in Thai camps, especially among young refugees in Mae La. Stress, drugs, and alcohol have been blamed for the trend. Meanwhile, aid dwindles and pressures to return are increasing.

### ***Northern Burma***

- Burma Army offensives in Kachin state have forced 2,000 people living in Zai Aung IDP camp to flee for their safety to KIO-run Sha It Yang IDP camp, FBR reported.
- A local militia in Kachin State has displaced 70 households of IDPs from their land. The militia claims they need the land for farming and have already destroyed the IDPs' homes. The militia is a splinter group from the KIA and has a ceasefire agreement with the government.

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- Donors to Shan and Karen IDP camps are planning to discontinue food aid in Sep 2017, leaving app. 9,000 people affected. According to KORD, livelihoods are extremely limited and there are no plans for resettlement.
- During her first trip to Kachin State since becoming the State Counsellor, DASSK spoke at a Kachin IDP camp housing some of the 200 people displaced by hostilities in the area between the BA and KIA since 2012.
- Over 20,000 civilians fled armed conflict between the MNDAA and BA across the border to China.

## PEACE PROCESS

- Following the Panghsang meeting, there are signs that northern EAOs, including UNFC members KIO and SSPP, may resign from the UNFC in pursuit of a new peace process outside the current NCA and led by the UWSA.
- Other UNFC members such as the NMSP have signalled they might change their policy of all-inclusiveness and join the NCA. A spokesperson noted that the NMSP would continue to support other EAOs in political negotiations.
- Analysts and observers are concerned that these developments may lead to the disintegration of the UNFC and more polarisation between the powerful EAOs in the north and other EAOs. Many claim that all-inclusiveness is the only path to bring peace to the decades-old conflict.
- In the beginning of March, the DPN, negotiating body of the UNFC, met with DASSK in Naypyitaw and submitted a 9-point proposal to guide their talks. Agreement in principle has been made, pending approval by the members of the UNFC.
- During her speech on March 30 marking the first anniversary of the NLD government, DASSK said that five UNFC members will sign the NCA: KNPP, NMSP, ANC, LDU and WNO. Following the announcement on TV, UNFC members said they have not yet confirmed the signing.
- Earlier during the month, DASSK had also made a comment saying that KIO had committed to signing the NCA. Gen Gun Maw, vice chairman of the KIO, was upset about her comments and said he didn't understand where she got this message from.
- The WLB concluded its 9<sup>th</sup> Congress, announcing new leadership and an upcoming relocation to Burma. The WLB adopted a new policy to promote women's participation in the peace process and has established a team to represent the organization in political dialogue.
- Over 20,000 people in Moulmein participated in a protest against the parliamentary decision to name a bridge after Bogyoke Aung San. Protestors are resisting the central government's decision, which overrides Mon residents' wishes.

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## ARMED CONFLICT

- In Northern Shan state an attack by the MNDAA left 30 people dead, including civilians and police officers. The NA-B, of which the MNDAA is a member, stated that no other ethnic group was involved in the attack. Armed clashes between the BA and MNDAA in early March resulted in the death of dozens of BA soldiers and the displacement of more than 20,000 civilians from Kokang to China.
- On March 7, BA opened fire on NCA signatory RCSS/SSA in Hsipaw Township. Lt-Col Sai Nguen, the RCSS/SSA spokesperson, said, "I seriously doubt their sincerity with regards the NCA. Or is it that they wish to scupper the upcoming 21CPC peace talks that are due to be held later this month?"
- Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing said during a visit to Vietnam that "The Tatmadaw really wants peace and is against war." Many ethnic groups have trouble believing this. For example, in the Shan State, civilians are witnessing increasing BA army supplies and troops in the area, and they fear conflict will soon follow.
- Major Mai Aik Kyaw, the PSLF/TNLA information officer, said "On one side, you have the government organizing peace talks and shouting about peace. It says it will invite every group to participate. But on the other hand, you have the Tatmadaw, which does not want every group at the meetings. Instead, it launches more attacks."
- BA accused the SSPP/SSA RCSS/SSA of undermining local development and violating their ceasefire agreement. The SSPP/SSA responded by saying that BA offensives have inhibited local development.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

- A local community leader in Hsipaw Township in Shan State was shot and killed on Feb 26, SHRF reported on March 3. The community is calling for a thorough investigation as assassinations of this type have been occurring regularly.
- BHRN released a statement noting that evidence supports a prima facie case against the State of Burma for war crimes in Kachin State and crimes against humanity in Arakan State.
- BA shot a Ta'ang villager and civilian, Mine A'lwit Dote (aged 24 years) in Kutkai Township. He died on March 10.
- Between March 6 and March 15, 90 ethnic Shan villagers were arrested and 2 were killed by TNLA troops, said 35 Shan CSOs, urging all sides to stop using civilians as weapons of war.

# PEACE & CONFLICT UPDATE – MARCH 2017

The logo for Burma Link, consisting of the words "BURMA" and "LINK" stacked vertically in white, uppercase letters on a red rectangular background.

Updates archive: <http://www.burmalink.org/peace-conflict-updates/>

- Burma Chief of General Staff of the Military, General Mya Tun Oo claims that the military is investigating human rights violations in Arakan state and insisted that the presence of "Bengali" people and mosques demonstrate that no persecution is taking place.
- On March 24, in a landmark decision, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution to urgently dispatch an international fact-finding mission to look into gross human rights violations in Arakan State.
- 2 villagers were arbitrarily arrested by BA aligned BGF troops in Mong Yawng, eastern Shan State, during March 13-18, on suspicion of having links to Shan armed groups. Both men were later released.