

## ACRONYM DICTIONARY

AA	Arakan Army
ANP	Arakan National Party
BA	Burma Army (Tatmadaw)
BROUK	Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSFOP	Civil Society Forum on Peace
DASSK	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
DOC	Deed of Commitment
DPN	Delegation for Political Dialogue (negotiating body of the UNFC)
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation
ENAC	Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Centre
HRV	Human Rights Violation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KESAN	Karen Environmental and Social Action Network
KNLA	Karen National Liberation Army, armed wing of the KNU
KNU	Karen National Union
KIA	Kachin Independence Army, armed wing of the KIO
KIO	Kachin Independence organisation
LNDP	Lisu National Development Party
MNDAA	Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
NA-B	Northern Alliance-Burma (made up of KIA, TNLA, MNDAA, and AA)
NBF	Nationalities Brotherhood Federation
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
RCSS/SSA	Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (South)
SSPP/SSA	Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (North)
UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
UPC	Union Peace Conference
UPDJC	Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee
UPNDC	Union Political Negotiation Dialogue Committee
UWSA	United Wa State Army
WNA	Wa National Army
WNO	Wa National Organisation
21CPC	21st Century Panglong Conference

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

## IN BRIEF

- BA continued to send more troops to Kachin and Shan States and conflict escalated in the area with a number of civilian casualties. BA continued to abuse civilians especially in conflict areas, including killing 3 Kachin IDPs.
- The Union Peace Conference also known as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference (21CPC) took place between May 24-27 in Naypyidaw.

# PEACE & CONFLICT UPDATE – MAY 2017

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

The logo for Burma Link, featuring the words "BURMA" and "LINK" in white, stacked vertically, on a red background.

- 21CPC - The UPNDC (Panghsan Alliance of 7 northern EAOs led by the UWSA) members including the TNLA, AA, and MNDAA attended the opening ceremony as “special guests,” but also held separate meetings with DASSK.
- 21CPC - Other important stakeholders such as the armed ethnic alliance UNFC did not attend as they were not given equal status in the discussions, among other reasons.
- 21CPC - Participants agreed to 37 of 41 basic federal principles and signed part 1 of the Union Accord. The debate about the term “non-secession from the Union” was not settled.
- Decreasing funding continues to increase pressure to return for refugees and IDPs along the Thailand-Burma border. Thousands of Karen villagers protested at Ei Tu Hta IDP camp for the withdrawal of BA from their lands before they could return.
- Launch of Kachin State Jade mining documentary by Global Witness was canceled in Rangoon. The next day, four freelance miners were shot dead by security forces.
- CSO groups in Burma as well as the EU support the UN fact finding mission in Arakan State, in contrast to Burma Government and DASSK.

## ARMED CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT

### *Kachin and Northern Shan State*

- BA had several conflicts with TNLA in many areas of northern Shan State April 29-30 and May 2, resulting in an elderly woman and three villagers (2 children) being killed in Namkhan Township from BA artillery.
- Fighting escalated between BA and MNDAA & TNLA. On May 9<sup>th</sup> MNDAA said fighting has been almost daily since April 27. Fighting between MNDAA and BA broke out in Kokang again on May 11<sup>th</sup>. BA used heavy weaponry to attack MNDAA bases, MNDAA replied with ground attacks that day.
- TNLA reported 20 different clashes with BA during a two-week span between the end of April and beginning of May. 300 villagers were displaced after fighting occurred between BA and TNLA in Namtu Township on May 11<sup>th</sup>.

# PEACE & CONFLICT UPDATE – MAY 2017

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

The logo for Burma Link, featuring the words "BURMA" and "LINK" in white, stacked vertically, on a red background.

- Heavy Fighting between TNLA and RCSS increased in Kyaukme Township, destroying houses and injuring a number of civilians on May 13<sup>th</sup>. 200 IDPs fled to Namtu Township, placing additional pressure on Namtu's IDP camp. TNLA stated they are ready to talk with RCSS if they can find a place to meet that both sides agree to.
- By May 8<sup>th</sup>, BA had deployed around 2,000 troops to areas surrounding KIA headquarters, and BA continued to send more troops to Kachin and Shan States during the second week of May in addition to trucks with ammunition and weaponry.
- KIA troops and BA clashed in Kachin State after 5 battalions of BA troops entered KIA territory on May 19<sup>th</sup>.
- A 2,000 strong protest by Lisu people was held on May 22<sup>nd</sup> against KIA to stop violence and killings against their people. LNDP issued a statement to KIO for killing, extorting, and recruiting soldiers. KIO said that the statement was exaggerated and not factual.
- 300 Chin fled armed conflict between BA and AA from Chin state and into Mizoram India on May 19-20. They were repatriated a week later to Chin State by the Assam Rifles, an Indian military force.

## UNION PEACE CONFERENCE MAY 24-27

### *Prior to the 21CPC*

- The UWSA instituted the 'Union Political Negotiation Dialogue Committee' (UPNDC) as a counter-strategy to the NCA process. The Panghsang Alliance group also includes AA, TNLA, MNDAA, KIO, NDAA, and SSA-N. The group announced they are only willing to meet with the government if they are invited together, not separately.
- BA Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing criticized the alternate process of the UPNDC as being the equivalent of a power struggle and a threat to the Union. Vice chairman of ABSDF U Myo Win stated he was not worried about this opinion, as long as understanding regarding political dialogue could be reached.
- KIA submitted its resignation letter to the UNFC on April 29<sup>th</sup>, with a draft of WNO's letter also being leaked the first week of May. KIO stated they did not want to be a hindrance to other EAOs in the UNFC and wanted to give up involvement in the NCA. WNO reported that they had some more difficulty in collaborating alongside discussions of forming an umbrella Wa organisation.

# PEACE & CONFLICT UPDATE – MAY 2017

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

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

- The government asked UNFC to sign a Deed of Commitment (DoC) before they can attend the 21CPC, which the UNFC did not sign.
- The government peace commission approached the Panghsang alliance to discuss the peace process prior to 21CPC. The alliance stated that they were waiting for the government's invitation to the conference.
- UPDJC announced the right for ethnic states to self-determination, they will be able to draft their own constitutions according to a meeting held May 7-9. These constitutions, however, will have to be in accordance with the national 2008 Constitution, which grants the military far reaching powers in ethnic states all the way down to village level.
- UNFC member NMSP said they have agreed to sign the NCA, but only if other EAOs will sign as well, The Irrawaddy reported on May 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Nationalities Brotherhood Forum, a group of 25 political parties, issued a list of five demands at its meeting on May 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> calling for political dialogue, honouring the NCA, consultations with local residents on environmental projects, support for ethnic civilians and IDPs.
- The government changed the title from "observer" to "special guest" status on May 22<sup>nd</sup> to NMSP, KNPP, SSPP, KIO, ANC, LHU, WNO, MNDAA, and the UWSA as many groups like NMSP complained that they were not willing to attend as observers. The change of the title did not, however, solve the problem of not being able to participate.
- Despite being a mandatory step of the NCA, State Counselor DASSK rejected the ALP request to hold an ethnic-based national-level political dialogue in Arakan State, saying it is a sensitive region.

## **Attendance**

- The UNFC did not attend the 21 CPC for 3 main reasons: (1) participation would have been with a "special guest" status without equal status to participate in negotiations and decision-making processes; (2) the UNFC created a 9-point proposal to the government is still ongoing and therefore the UNFC is unable to sign the NCA; (3) as an NCA non-signatory, the UNFC members were not able to hold state-level political dialogues and submit the outcomes to the Union Peace Conference.

# PEACE & CONFLICT UPDATE – MAY 2017

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

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

- The UPNDC (Panghsan Alliance) members were invited to attend the conference a few days before, except for the TNLA, AA, and MNDAA, which received their invitations last minute the day before. The Alliance attended the conference in the capacity of “special guests” and only stayed for the opening ceremony.
- DASSK met with the Panghsan Alliance in an informal setting on Friday May 26<sup>th</sup>, and in a separate meeting with TNLA, MNDAA, and AA.

## **Outcomes**

- After the negotiations, stakeholder representatives from the government, Parliament, BA, political parties, and EAO NCA signatories agreed to 37 of 41 basic federal principles and signed part 1 of the Union Accord.
- The debate about the term “non-secession from the Union” was not settled and BA wants a commitment from the EAOs that they pledge not to separate from the state. EAOs saw this as a sign of distrust and BA was not willing to compromise. Other key principles regarding equality, self-determination and federalism have not yet been included in the accord, and delegates said further discussion would continue in this regard.
- According to ENAC, peace conferences must include all stakeholders to be fully effective. The principle of inclusiveness is essential to finding durable solutions and to ensure sustainable peace. Nevertheless, ENAC saw the outcome of the conference a moderate success, serving as a venue where viewpoints were openly exchanged in an attempt resolve long-running armed conflicts.

## **DISPLACEMENT ALONG THE THAILAND-BURMA BORDER**

- Several model villages for refugees are currently being constructed for repatriation in several areas under the KNU, estimated to be a total of 1,000 houses funded by the Nippon Foundation.
- 71 refugees were repatriated to Burma from Nu Poe and Tham Hin camps in October 2016, first return facilitated by the UNHCR. One family interviewed in Rangoon reported on May 11<sup>th</sup> that they are not sure if they will be able to enrol their children in school as their education from the camps is not recognized.

- Authorities in both Thailand and Burma are cracking down on people smuggling but the number of people crossing the border has continued to rise through land trails. Data from immigration police in Mae Sot shows that the number of people from Burma smuggled raised by almost 5,000 in 2 years.
- A decrease in funding is increasing pressure on repatriation for refugees. However, the peace process is still non-inclusive, ceasefires remain fragile, Burma Army militarisation has increased in ceasefire areas, and landmines still need to be cleared. The option for resettlement to third countries is also decreasing.
- UNHCR has invited refugees for voluntary repatriation and asked them to visit Volunteer Repatriation Camps (VRCs) set up in all 9 camps along the border. On May 13<sup>th</sup>, the UNHCR sent invitations to some refugees although they were not interested in returning and had given no such indication to the UNHCR.
- On May 24<sup>th</sup>, thousands of Karen villagers protested at Ei Tu Hta IDP camp for the withdrawal of BA from their lands before they could return to their original lands.

## HUMAN RIGHTS

### *Jade mining in Kachin State*

- Global Witness released a documentary on May 16<sup>th</sup> about the jade mining in Kachin State and how it fuels armed conflict. The film screening in Rangoon was cancelled one day before, the hotel announcing it did not have permission to show the film. Activists commented that the cancellation was clearly orchestrated as BA continues to try to control the jade business and the land. View the video: <https://youtu.be/kwGuSUM2kh0>
- On May 17<sup>th</sup>, four freelance jade miners were shot dead in Khamti Township, Kachin State, by security guards. The mine is owned by the BA.

### *Kachin and Shan States*

- Residents in Mong Nong, Shan State, reported that BA has taken 30 acres of land from them with no compensation on April 27<sup>th</sup>, a continuation of land seizure from the 1990s and 2000s.

# PEACE & CONFLICT UPDATE – MAY 2017

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

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

- Two men held captive by TNLA for possibly being connected to RCSS were released after 2 months. TNLA verified that they were not connected to RCSS. They were among the 90 civilians detained on March 12<sup>th</sup> by TNLA.
- 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Civil Society Forum on Peace (CSFOP) called for an end to forced conscription in the country by BA and EAOs in Kachin and Shan States. A letter was sent to DASSK, BA Chief Snr-Gen, UPDJC Chairman, and the UNFC Gen Sec.
- Two coal companies, Pyae Aung Hein and Hein Mitter, in Shan State were given government permission to mine for coal and started in January 2017. After much protesting from local residents, the companies stated they would stop all operations. Instead, they put up barriers and checkpoints around the sites and continued digging, causing air pollution, damaging the roads, and polluting local water sources.
- A viral Facebook video of BA torturing and violently treating civilians on May 24<sup>th</sup> has been pointed out by international human rights organisations for an immediate investigation. The civilians were suspected of being in TNLA. This video would be investigated by the government with action taken accordingly, said DASSK's office on May 31<sup>st</sup>.
- 3 Kachin IDPs were abducted by BA soldiers on May 25<sup>th</sup> and killed the next day by BA. The bodies were found on May 29<sup>th</sup> and returned to the families after an autopsy.

## ***Arakan (Rakhine) State***

- EU supports the UN fact finding mission, in contrast to Burma Government and DASSK.
- In response to a report written by the UN on HRVs regarding the Rohingya, BA has rejected allegations of human rights abuses (including mass killings and gang rapes) during the crackdown on October 9<sup>th</sup>. Of 18 allegations they found 12 to be incorrect and 6 falsified. This prompted almost 60 CSOs from Burma to call on NLD to cooperate with the UN fact finding mission, established to look at HRVs in Arakan State.

## ***Karen State***

- BA announces that they will lead a demining operation in cooperation with Karen National Union in Karen State. Saw Alex Htoo from Karen CSO KESAN responded that

# PEACE & CONFLICT UPDATE – MAY 2017

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



demining would be too premature and first the political issues needed to be resolved for any demining success.

## ***Political prisoners***

- 259 prisoners were released under presidential amnesty on May 24<sup>th</sup>, the first day of the peace conference including Hla Phone, accused of handling a Facebook Pge ridiculing the military, as well as interfaith activists Pwint Phyu Latt and Zaw Zaw Latt. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners said that this was welcome, but there were still 40 political prisoners in prison, and 198 facing trial.