

PEACE & CONFLICT UPDATE – FEBRUARY 2017

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

**BURMA
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What's Happening

- The UPDJC suspended regional-level discussions involving the CNF and the ALP in the run-up to the second 21CPC.
- Kachin National Conference was stopped by police in Myitkina, Kachin State capitol, but later allowed under the name of “meeting.”
- The second 21CPC that was set to be held on Feb 28 has been postponed to be held sometime in March.
- 70th Anniversary of Union Day was held in Panglong, Shan State, where DASSK called for EAOs to sign the NCA, despite some EAOs still being excluded from the pact.
- Several arrests were made in connection to the high-profile assassination of U Ko Ni at Rangoon international airport on Jan 29.
- New [ND-Burma report](#) covering the year 2016 found serious violations such as torture and killings to have nearly doubled from 2015.
- [Burma Link, KSNG and KYO launched a documentary film about refugee youth and education along the Thailand-Burma border in a press conference in Yangon on Feb 22.](#)
- National CSO Forum was held in Naypyidaw and preliminary forum in Taunggyi.

ACRONYM DICTIONARY

AA	Arakan Army
ALP	Arakan Liberation Party
APRRN	Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network
BA	Burma Army (Tatmadaw)
BGF	Border Guard Forces
BNI	Burma News International
DKBA	Democratic Karen Benevolent Army
CNDP	Chin National Democratic Party
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CNF	Chin National Front
DPN	Delegation for Political Dialogue (of UNFC)

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EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation
FBR	Free Burma Rangers
HRW	Human Rights Watch
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
KWO	Karen Women's Organisation
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
NRPC	National Reconciliation and Peace Centre
PSLF	Palaung State Liberation Front
RGP	Rocket-propelled grenade
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army, armed wing of the PSLF
UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
UPC	Union Peace Conference
UPDJC	Union Peace Dialogue Joint Committee
UWSA	United Wa State Army
21CPC	21 st Century Panglong Peace Conference

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

HUMAN RIGHTS

- [ND-Burma 2016 Human Rights report](#) found violations such as torture and killing to have about doubled compared to 2015. Majority of the violations were committed by the Burma Army, over half in the Shan State. [Read Burma Link's interview with Ko Han Gyi, Coordinator of ND-Burma.](#)
- Human rights violations are mounting at the Letpadaung mine in Burma's Sagaing Division. Amnesty International's report about the abuses released on Feb 10 calls for an immediate halt to mining operations until current policies can be investigated and violations are stopped.

U KO NI ASSASSINATION - UPDATE

- [34 organisations working for human rights and democracy in Burma \(including Burma Link\), signed a joint statement calling for the establishment of an urgent, independent and impartial investigation into the murder of U Ko Ni](#). The statement is an addition to numerous other statements, which include a joint statement by over 200 CBOs, joint statement by 20 Rohingya organisations worldwide, Legal Aid Network, Forum Asia, ANC, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, ALTSEAN-Burma and International Federation for Human Rights, and Fortify Rights.
- U Ko Ni had argued that no provision in the 2008 Constitution says it cannot be abolished by a simple majority vote in parliament. He had been working on a new progressive constitution that could have been quickly adopted in such a scenario when he was shot and killed.
- DASSK remained silent about the assassination for almost a month until she finally spoke at U Ko Ni's memorial service hosted by the NLD, describing him as a martyr and important colleague.
- Shortly after the assassination, police arrested Kyi Linn, the reported gunman, as well as Myint Swe and Aung Win Zaw in connection to the murder. On Feb 15, The President's Offices alleged that Aung Win Khaing, a retired army lieutenant colonel and brother of Aung Win Zaw, masterminded the killing. The gun used by Kyi Linn to shoot U Ko Ni was purchased from Myint Swe in Umpiem Mai refugee camp, according to what Aung Win Zaw told the police. Aung Win Khaing is currently still in hiding.

DISPLACEMENT

Thailand-Burma border

- President Donald Trump implemented a ban on refugee arrivals, originally set to last for a minimum of 4 months. While Burma wasn't one of the seven Muslim-majority countries completely banned from entering the U.S., many refugees awaiting resettlement to the U.S. were affected. The ban was later lifted, but U.S. immigration reform is an ongoing process.
- A displaced villager from the Mae Tha Wor area, Karen State, stepped on a landmine and had his leg amputated below the knee, as he and other villagers returned to their village to check their plantations on Jan 31. The villager was one of around 6,000 civilians displaced by the conflict between the splinter DKBA and BA-backed BGF late last year.

Kachin and Shan States

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- Thousands of citizens in Kachin and Northern Shan States have fled ongoing BA attacks in the area. [FBR documented the case of one family: a 34-year-old Kachin woman with 6 children](#) endured bombings in her village, 6 weeks of walking to the Chinese border, forced return back to Burma, BA opening fire on them - all while she was 8-9 months pregnant. The baby was born on the jungle floor. The family then endured continuous hunger and extreme cold before reaching Je Yang IDP camp.
- After months of public silence, DASSK acknowledged the deteriorating security environment in Kachin State, donating 300 million kyats (\$222,000) in cash assistance to IDPs. Suu Kyi turned over the donation to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement on Feb 2.

Arakan State

- [The APRRN declared Bangladesh's plan for Rohingya settlement on an uninhabitable island a violation of human rights](#). They call for the Government of Bangladesh to remember their obligation to provide a humane place of safety.
- In a recent report, HRW documented dozens of cases of sexual assault in girls as young as 13, which "did not appear to be random or opportunistic, but part of a coordinated and systematic attack against Rohingya," HRW news release said.
- A recent UN report uncovered extensive crimes, including many sexual violations against civilians by BA troops. Aye Aye Soe, deputy director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that Burma has been the victim of "disinformation, misinformation and fake news" on the issue.

CONFLICT UPDATE

- Conflicts have increased in ethnic lands, including ceasefire areas, after the UPC in Aug 2016, claimed Nai Kasauh Mon, executive director of BNI. He said the conference exposed the issue both sides couldn't agree on: BA wants to set up a federal system with the 2008 Constitution and the ethnic people want a new constitution.
- On Feb 14, BA took control of two NMSP checkpoints along the Thanbyuzayat-Three Pagoda Pass Road and raided NMSP's office in Ye Township. Tension began after the NMSP ignored orders from the BA to halt 70th Mon National Day celebrations and a planned military parade. The NMSP have signed a ceasefire agreement at both the state and union level, but they have not signed the non-inclusive NCA. On Feb 16, NMSP met with BA to diffuse tensions.

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- [In a report published on Feb 9, FBR noted that many villages in Karen and Karenni areas felt more secure and permanent](#) than they did during their last mission in 2008. Villagers have rebuilt homes, churches, and schools that they had to leave behind during past BA attacks. Fear of the BA, which has camps in the area fully stocked with weapons and other supplies, still remains.

PEACE PROCESS UPDATE

- KWO held the 2nd Karen Women's Seminar on Feb 2-3 to discuss strategies for how to promote and advance the work of women's rights organizations and to support women's participation in the peace process. Despite the 30% quota in the peace process, women's involvement has been limited.
- On Feb 4, demonstrations took place all over Burma. Citizens called for peace, attainable if the government amends the constitution, and protested on behalf of IDPs in Kachin and Shan States.
- Feb 5 marked the celebration of the 56th anniversary of Kachin Revolution Day. Ceremonies were held by Kachin communities around the world and awards were distributed. KIO chairman Lanyaw Zawng Hra spoke about the importance of remaining united, hopeful, and steadfast, also emphasizing his gratitude to KIA soldiers.
- On Feb 6, The UPDJC suspended regional-level discussions involving the CNF and the ALP in the run-up to the 21CPC. The CNDP objected the decision, and CNF reported being unsure whether it is joining the UPC. The ALP called for the 21CPC to be postponed until Chin and Arakan groups can hold regional level forums. The 21CPC was subsequently postponed to be held sometime in March.
- 70th anniversary of Union Day (Feb 12) was held in Panglong, Shan State, where DASSK made a speech calling for EAOs to sign the NCA and join the peace process. Analysts such as Sai Wansai challenged her speech, pointing out that some EAOs are still excluded from signing and that DASSK seems to be ignoring the reasons why many EAOs are hesitant to sign.
- KIO and KNU met in Kachin State on Feb 16 to discuss their perspectives on the peace process. Following the meeting, KNU and KIO released a joint statement emphasizing the need to include NCA non-signatory armed groups like KIO in peace talks.
- On Feb 16, the police blocked the gates of the Kachin National Conference grounds in Myitkina, when about 200 attendees were already inside. In total, about 600 people had traveled to attend the conference to choose representatives for the 21CPC. The conference was later allowed to continue after changing its name to a "meeting."
- The UWSA invited several EAOs to attend a summit in Wa's state capitol Pangsang from Feb 21-23. Invitees included the NA-B and some members of the UNFC/DPN. Chairman Bao Youxiang said ethnic leaders need a "new path to peace," stating that increasing hostilities between BA and EAOs have shown that NCA will not be the solution to Burma's

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

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ongoing conflict. Following the summit, several NCA non-signatory EAOs decided not to sign the NCA.

- TNLA will only take part if all EAOs are equally invited and all are allowed equal rights to discuss and to make decisions. Even though some non-NCA signatories were invited to take part in the peace conference, the NA-B, including TNLA, AA, and MNDAA, were not invited.
- Sai Nyunt Kyaw, secretary of the government's UPDJC's political parties division, noted that the topic of a federal union would be central in the second 21CPC.
- BA did not permit the Shan National Conference to be held in the state capital of Taunggyi, raising concerns regarding whether ethnic Shans may gather to express opinions and make decisions ahead of the 21CPC.
- The nationwide CSO peace forum was held on February 24-25 in Naypyidaw. A preparatory forum took place just prior, on February 22-23 in Taunggyi, Shan State.
- Members of the DPN (discussion body of the UNFC) met with DASSK on Feb 28. Vice-chairman of the UNFC, Nai Hongsai, has stated that all armed groups should be included in the NCA and that international observers should be permitted to attend peace talks.