

PEACE & CONFLICT UPDATE – NOVEMBER 2017

**BURMA
LINK**

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

Updates archive: <https://www.burmalink.org/peace-process-overview/>

ACRONYM DICTIONARY

AA	Arakan Army
AMRDP	All Mon Region Democracy Party
ARSA	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army
BA	Burma Army (Tatmadaw)
DASSK	Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
EAO	Ethnic Armed Organisation
FPNCC	Federal Political Negotiation Consultative Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KIA	Kachin Independence Arm, armed wing of the KIO
KIO	Kachin Independence Organization
KNU	Karen National Union
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MNP	Mon National Party
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (in name only, not inclusive and not nationwide)
NDAA	National Democratic Alliance Army (Eastern Shan State Army)
NLD	National League for Democracy
NMSP	New Mon State Party
PC	Peace Commission
RCSS/SSA-S	Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (South)
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SSPP/SSA-N	Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (North)
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
TBC	The Border Consortium
UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN SC	United Nations Security Council
UPC	Union Peace Conference
UWP	United Wa State Party
21CPC	21st Century Panglong Conference

NOVEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

- This month, the Burma government announced that demonstrations are now banned in 11 of the most densely populated Yangon townships.
- Armed conflict between the BA and EAOs has been on the rise, with numerous clashes reported between the KIA and BA in Kachin and Northern Shan States, and the AA and the BA in Chin State.
- The third 21CPC was announced to take place during the final week of January 2018.

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- While a formal meeting between the FPNCC and the government has yet to take place, the UNFC and the PC have reported making steady progress towards agreeing on the UNFC's eight-point proposal to signing the NCA.
- In response to the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis and allegations of severe human rights abuse by the BA, US Secretary Rex Tillerson formally labelled the situation as 'ethnic cleansing'. Talks about establishing specific sanctions targeting the military are under way.

FUNDING CUTS ON THE THAILAND-BURMA BORDER

Funding cuts continue to make life more difficult for the displaced populations on the Thailand-Burma border, impacting their access to food, education and health services.

In October, TBC ceased food assistance to Karen IDP camp Ei Thu Hta and four Shan IDP camps with a total population of over 8,200 people.

- Read about Burma Link's ["Keep Supporting" campaign](#)
- Read the urgent [Karen appeal](#) (and bank details)
- Read the urgent [Shan appeal](#)

Mae Tao clinic, which provides free medical services for displaced and migrant populations from Burma, is facing a funding crisis and [has initiated an emergency fundraising appeal](#).

SITUATION IN THE ARAKAN (RAKHINE) STATE

Background: Over 600,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh following the large scale 'clearance operations' by government security forces in Arakan State. The crackdown came as a response to ARSA attacks on several police and army posts on August 25. The high volume of new arrivals and the density of refugee population has led to precarious conditions in the refugee camps in Bangladesh, where survivors speak of horrific abuses including mass killings and rape, and torching of villages in Arakan State.

- Bangladesh and Burma signed an MOU on the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to begin in 2-months' time. The UNHCR stated that the **conditions in Arakan are not stable for safe and sustainable repatriation**. The Bangladesh government began a biometric registration process of counting refugees, however some are hesitant to register as they do not want to be repatriated. Meanwhile, 100,000 refugees will reportedly be relocated to the flooding-prone Bhashan Char, or Thengar Char, island in Bangladesh. In Arakan, the state government is planning to relocate IDPs and close down temporary shelters.

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- US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson formally met with DASSK and Sen-Gen Min Aung Hlaing on November 15 in Naypyidaw, and addressed the ongoing crisis in Arakan State. In a statement on November 22, Rex Tillerson and **the US formally labeled the situation in Arakan as ethnic cleansing.**
- The majority of the **international community continues to pressure the Burma government to scale up efforts to address the crisis, and condemns the actions of the Burma Army** against Rohingya people. A November 6 UN SC statement addressed the crisis in Arakan State and condemned the "Excessive violence" by the military. The Burma government subsequently heavily criticized the statement. **Several governments around the world considering the re-institution of sanctions.** US lawmakers have proposed the Burma Act of 2017, which would re-impose certain trade bans linked to military activities.
- Despite expectations that Pope Francis would explicitly address the Rohingya crisis during his four-day trip to Burma, in his speech in Naypyidaw on November 28, the Pope preached on 'unity in spite of religious differences' but did not specifically refer to the 'Rohingya' people.

PEACE PROCESS

- The **date for the third 21CPC was set for the final week of January 2018.**
- The RCSS/SSA-S, which did not attend the previous 21CPC after having been denied permission to hold national-level political dialogue, announced they have the permission to hold the dialogue in January.
- Mon political parties AMRDP and MNP stated that the Mon should be allowed to hold state level dialogue regardless of whether the NMSP has signed the NCA.
- Some progress was reported in talks between the government's negotiating team PC and the UNFC on November 8-9. Several agreements were reached on the UNFC's eight-point proposal, although some controversial issues remain unaddressed.
- The UWSP and NDAA met with PC on November 11 and 12. As both are members of the FPNCC, the issue of FPNCC-government talks was raised but an agreement is yet to be reached.

ARMED CONFLICT AND ABUSE

- **Armed conflict intensified between the KIA and BA in November**, with numerous clashes reported throughout the month in Northern Shan and various locations in the Kachin State. BA

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continued its heavy use of mortars and reportedly fired at Maiyu Lay IDP camp in the Shan State, resulting in some property damage but no civilian casualties.

- **Fighting between the AA and BA escalated** near Paletwa Township, Chin State, with deadly clashes taking place particularly along the Burma-India Border. The clashes included casualties on both sides (reportedly particularly BA side), BA employing military gunships, and AA ceasing ammunition and weapons from the BA. Several ethnic Arakan and Chin **civilians were injured and at least one civilian killed** in the clashes., with at least **three civilians also killed by landmines**. More than **1,200 civilians were displaced** in the area, many now residing in Mizoram on the Indian side of the border.
- A brief skirmish took place between the NCA signatory RCSS/SSA-S and BA on November 19 in Kunhing Township, Shan State.
- At the end of November, SHRF reported that the **BA used forced labor, looted food and requisitioned trucks from civilians** in Hsipaw, Shan State, as part of military operations against the SSPP/SSA-N, which has a bilateral ceasefire with the government.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND VOICES FROM THE GROUND

- **Development projects continue to be the object of local concerns and protests.** Land-rights activist Htay Aung was attacked by a mob and killed on November 1; Fourteen Mon farmers saw their lands confiscated without being notified by the government; Development projects which stirred local activism this month were the mineral extraction and mining activities around Min Lwin and Lon Nya Mountains (Karen State), the mining projects in Paung Township (Mon State), and the SEZ in Kyauk Phru Township (Arakan State).
- **Burma government maintains a tight grip on freedom of expression.** Demonstrations are now prohibited in 11 of the most densely populated Yangon townships including the city's downtown; Three reporters working for a Turkish state broadcaster were arrested for flying a drone near the Naypyidaw parliamentary complex; Lower house of parliament approved a proposal for the government to monitor "misuse" of information technology with the stated purpose of limiting "fake news".
- **A 14-year-old boy** from Namhsan Township, Northern Shan State, **was sentenced to two years imprisonment under the Unlawful Association Act** for contacting the TNLA. There was no lawyer representing him during the trial.
- In Thailand, the suspension of enforcing of the 2017 Labour Protection Act, which sparked panic and mass departures of Burma migrants in June and July 2017, was extended until March 2018.