

# PEACE & CONFLICT UPDATE – DECEMBER 2017

**BURMA  
LINK**

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

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

## ACRONYM DICTIONARY

AA	Arakan Army
AMDP	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
KNPP	Karenni National Progressive Party
MNP	Mon National Party
NCA	Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (in name only, not inclusive and not nationwide)
NLD	National League for Democracy
NMSP	New Mon State Party
NSCN-K	Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland - Khaplang
PC	Peace Commission
RCSS/SSA-S	Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (South)
SSPP/SSA-N	Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (North)
TNLA	Ta'ang National Liberation Army
UNFC	United Nationalities Federal Council
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN SG	United Nations Secretary General
UPC	Union Peace Conference
21CPC	21st Century Panglong Conference

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## DECEMBER HIGHLIGHTS:

- Preparations are under way for the upcoming UPC, also known as the 21CPC, scheduled for the end of January. NCA signatory meeting took place in Chiang Mai in December, and national level dialogue is planned in Shan State and potentially in Mon State before the conference.
- Three KNPP soldiers and one civilian were detained and executed at a BA base in Loikaw, Karenni State, on December 20.
- Armed conflict between the BA and EAOs has escalated with BA offensives including heavy usage of mortars, artillery fire and fighter jets against KIA in Kachin and northern Shan States. Thousands of civilians fled their homes in the area. BA also stepped up military operations against the NCA-signatory RCSS/SSA in eastern Shan State and clashes were reported between BA and TNLA in northern Shan State. TNLA and SSPP clashed in an incident later characterized as an 'accident'.

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- Three civilians were killed and several injured by mortar shells fired by an unknown group in Muse Township, Shan State.
- Development projects continue to stir strong local opposition due to concerns about rights abuse and environmental destruction. In northern Shan State, 300 farmers from 17 townships protested against the Naung Pha dam and four other hydropower projects on the Salween River.
- Press freedom remains severely curtailed - two Reuters journalists were arrested on December 12 for allegedly possessing leaked documents pertaining to security operations in Arakan State.
- Rohingya repatriation process is set to begin on January 22 amidst serious concerns and civilians still fleeing Arakan in Burma to Bangladesh.
- Burma Government barred the UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee from visiting the country and withdrew cooperation with her for the rest of her tenure.

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## PEACE PROCESS

- In light of the **upcoming January UPC or 21 CPC**, NCA members met for a preparatory meeting in Chiang Mai on Dec 14-18
- BA deterred a planned national-level dialogue in Shan State by the CSSU Shan coalition on Dec 17 in Panglong. The CSSU said it would continue to hold public discussions despite the BA's obstruction.
- Members from the AMDP and MNP met to discuss the possibility of holding a national-level dialogue in Mon State despite not having signed the NCA.
- The NSCN-K was invited by the PC to attend the January UPC.
- The former KIO vice-president General N. Ban La became the new chairman of the KIO and the Kachin Independence Council on Jan 2. He also remains the second commander of the KIA. KIO has assured that its policies on political dialogue and the ongoing civil war will not change.

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## ARMED CONFLICT, ABUSE AND DISPLACEMENT

- On December 1, the TNLA took control of Mong Yin village-tract in Namtu Township, northern Shan State, from the SSPP/SSA-N, in an effort to stop drug trafficking. A **small clash between the TNLA and SSA-N**, both members of the northern alliance FPNCC, broke out five days later.

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Representative from the UWSA subsequently said that the clashes were an accident, and the issue will be discussed in the next FPNCC meeting.

- After clashes between the TNLA and BA in Namtu Township on December 6, a TNLA official said that there has been **significant escalation of BA offensives** in the area.
- Fighting between the KIA and BA continues to escalate. Fighting occurred all throughout the month in Kachin and northern Shan State and **heavy BA usage of mortars, artillery fire and fighter jets** was reported. Armed confrontations in Kachin State were concentrated around Laiza and the nearby Woi Chyai IDP camp, the Lapu Hka gold mines, Mansi Township, the Mali Hka and HOUNG ING gold mines in Sumprabum area, and several neighboring villages. The KIA reported renewed fighting with the BA near the Tanai and Hpakant amber mines since December 30. **Thousands of villagers abandoned their homes** in Sha Dhu Zut village, Hpakant Township, and took refuge in nearby churches.
- **The BA has stepped up military operations against the NCA-signatory RCSS/SSA** in Mong Paeng Township, Eastern Shan State. On Dec 4, the BA forced seven civilians from three villages to act as guides and porters. Over a dozen landmines were placed around the villages to stop inhabitants from fleeing.
- In Mong Yu village, Muse Township, Shan State, **three people, including a 12-year old boy, were killed** and several were injured on December 23 by mortar shells fired from an unknown group.

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## HUMAN RIGHTS

- **Three KNPP soldiers and one civilian were detained and executed at a BA base** in Loikaw Township, Karenni State, on December 20. This event led five youths to stage a protest in Loikaw, Karenni State, on December 22. The youths were subsequently ordered to appear before a court on January 5 after the local police filed charges against them.
- **Development projects continue to stir local opposition and concern.** In Northern Shan State, 300 farmers from 17 townships protested on December 23 against the Naung Pha dam and four other hydropower projects on the Salween River; In the Mon State, five residents from Kyaikmaraw and a monk organized a meeting with the Thai Siam Cement Group (SCG) on December 24 to discuss the controversial coal-powered MCL factory in Pyar Taung.
- **BA continues to restrict goods in Tanai Township, Kachin State.** Residents have started to run out of fuel and are facing rice shortages. The restrictions have been in place since BA siege of Tanai and conflict between the BA and KIA flared up in the area over a year ago.

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- On December 12, the Kyaukse district court began reviewing the appeal of Mai Cho Min Htwe, a 14-year old student who was sentenced for two years under the Unlawful Association Act for communicating with members of the TNLA.
- The two reporters from Turkish state broadcaster who had been arrested in November alongside their interpreter and their driver for flying a drone near the Naypyidaw parliamentary complex were released on December 29.
- **Two Reuters journalists were arrested** on December 12 under the 1923 Official Secrets Act for allegedly possessing leaked documents pertaining to security operations in Arakan State. This met strong domestic and international criticism, with HRW stating that the arrest violates international standards for the protection of freedom of expression and UN SG Guterres describing the event as a 'sign of corrosion of freedom of the press'. On December 27, the detention of the two journalists was extended, with the next court hearing scheduled for January 10.

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## SITUATION IN ARAKAN (RAKHINE) STATE

- According to UN OCHA, as of December 11 over 646,000 Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh following the large scale 'clearance operations' by government security forces in Arakan. The crackdown came as a response to ARSA attacks on several police and army posts on August 25.
- Rohingya survivors have spoken of horrific abuses including mass killings and rape, and torching of villages in Arakan. The UNHCR held a special session on December 5, and released a statement saying it is **"very likely" that BA forces are guilty of crimes against humanity**. The US imposed a sanction on Major General Maung Maung Soe for his leading role during the August crackdown.
- The high volume of new arrivals and the density of refugee population has led to precarious conditions in the refugee camps in Bangladesh, with UNICEF finding that nearly a quarter of refugee children are malnourished.
- **Repatriation process targeting 100,000 returns is set to begin on January 22 amidst serious concerns** such as ongoing reports of people fleeing to Bangladesh, HRW revealing that 354 Rohingya villages had been burnt down since August, and the discovery of mass grave near Maungdaw Township this month.
- Burma Government barred the UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee from visiting the country and withdrew cooperation with her for the rest of her tenure.