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News update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

Burmese government troops use villagers as human shields after attacks against ceasefire group in central Shan State

On October 13, 2013, Burmese government troops forced 18 villagers to walk between them as human shields while returning to their base, after attacking a Shan ceasefire group in Kunhing, close to the Salween River, in central Shan State.

About 80 Burmese troops from Light Infantry Battalion 150, based at Mong Zarng, 30 miles north of Kunhing, had attacked the Shan State Army-South during October 10 to 12, firing mortar shells and causing over 100 people from the village of Paeng Ner, southeast of Kunhing, to flee their homes. The name of the commanding officer of the Burmese troops was Than Hlaing Soe.

Early in the morning of October 13, residents of the nearby village of Weng Pui were summoned by the Burmese troops to the local temple, and ordered to accompany them back to the main road, about 6 miles away. The villagers pleaded with the troops, saying they needed to harvest their rice. However, the troops sealed the entrance to the temple, and finally forced 18 male villagers to accompany them back to the road.

The villagers were forced to walk between the soldiers: one villager between every three or four soldiers. When they reached the car road, several army trucks came to pick up the troops, and the villagers were allowed to return to their homes.

The attacks are in violation of the ceasefire agreement signed between the SSA-S and the Burmese government since December 2011, and may be linked to government plans to secure control of the area before construction of the Tasang (Mai Tong) dam by Chinese and Thai companies on the Salween River, south of Kunhing. On October 9, Thai media reported that the Thai government was urging Burma to speed up the Mai Tong dam in order to import 7,000 MW of electricity to Thailand.

The Burmese troops told villagers they were in the area to provide security for Chinese companies carrying out gold mining along the Salween River.

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LOCATION OF FIGHTING AND HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN KUN HING, OCTOBER 2013

