

Immediate release

21 January 2013

Statement on human rights violations in Burma (Myanmar) amidst air strikes on the people of Kachin by the Burmese military

Armed conflict between the Burmese military and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) restarted on 9 June 2011 and it marked the ending of the 17-year ceasefire agreement (1994-2011). Tens of thousands of ethnic-Kachin civilians fell victim to the conflict, which left many displaced and vulnerable.

On 8 October 2011, the Burmese military marched into Nam Lim Pa village and conducted unlawful arrests. Civilians who were detained by the military were severely treated and the men were forced to be labors.¹ On top of that, the military used anti-personal landmines and conscripted child soldiers as young as 14 during their attacks on areas in Kachin State, reported by media.²

On 19 December 2012, three people were wounded when a cargo train was hit by a bomb explosion and subsequent gunfire occurred along the battle between the Burmese military and the KIA in Mohnyin, a town in Kachin State.³ Since 27 December 2012, the Burmese military has been conducting frequent aerial attacks against the KIA, which place the civilians in great threats.⁴ The air strikes on Laiza (an area bordering Burma and China) were carried out almost on a daily basis.⁵ Attacks on 27 December 2012 on Lajayang, an area near Laiza, killed one man and seriously injured three other civilians, reported by an American photojournalist.⁶

On 10 January 2013, the Burmese military attacked Laiza and killed three civilians and six were wounded, said by KIA.⁷ A 15-year-old boy was one of the victims in the attack, according to a KIA spokesman Colonel James Lum Dau to AFP.⁸

Furthermore, according to the UN News Centre, it has been reported that an estimated 75,000 people have been displaced.⁹ An approximately 31,000 displaced

¹ Partners Relief & Development 2011, *Crimes in Northern Burma: Results from a fact-finding mission to Kachin State*, <<http://www.burmapartnership.org/2011/11/crimes-in-northern-burma/>> [Accessed 16 January 2013].

² Murdoch, L 2012, 'Burmese under fire for abuses in Kachin', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 March, <<http://www.smh.com.au/world/burmese-under-fire-for-abuses-in-kachin-20120320-1vi1d.html>> [16 January 2013].

³ Radio Free Asia, Burma 2012, *Bomb blast, shelling in Kachin*, 27 December, <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/50ed3406c.html>> [accessed 16 January 2013]

⁴ Olarn, K and Mullen, J 2013, 'Myanmar airstrikes on Kachin rebels raise global concerns', *Cable News Network (CNN)*, 3 January, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/01/03/world/asia/myanmar-kachin-violence/index.html>> [Accessed 16 January 2013].

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ AFP 2013, 'Kachin rebels say three dead in Myanmar strike', *Channel NewsAsia Singapore*, 14 January, <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/1247837/1.html> [Accessed 16 January 2013].

⁸ AAP 2013, 'Three die in Myanmar attack on Kachin base', *The Australian*, 14 January, <<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/breaking-news/three-die-in-myanmar-attack-on-kachin-base/story-fn3dxix6-1226553783191>> [Accessed 16 January 2013].

⁹ The United Nations News Centre 2012, 'UN relief chief asks Myanmar Government to allow aid deliveries in off-limits area', *The United Nations*, 7 December,

people are living in government-controlled areas such as Myitkyina, Kachin State's capital, and some live in fear as 'government security forces arrest and torture a campmate suspected of having ties to KIA'.¹⁰

The Burmese government admitted their knowledge of the air strikes but they claimed that it was a form of self-defense after the KIA disrupted convoys carrying ammunition supply, reported by media.¹¹

Despite repeated appeals from the U.N. for the Burmese government to allow humanitarian assistance to reach Kachin people in vulnerable areas, the U.N. has not been given to access since July 2012.¹² The U.N. Humanitarian Chief, Valerie Amos, stated that the U.N. was not allowed to enter both some Government controlled areas and those by the KIO.¹³ Up until now, only a handful of aid organizations were given permission to operate in the vulnerable areas which have been insufficient.

La Rip, coordinator of the Relief Action Network for IDPs and Refugees (RANIR) documented the deteriorating conditions at refugee camps and alerted the high food and water insecurity that the refugees and displaced persons faced.¹⁴ The conditions of overcrowded areas to which ethnic-Kachin people escaped have worsened with insecurities such as insufficient food and drinkable water, and poor sanitation.¹⁵ Diseases such as malaria and diarrhea became widespread.¹⁶

Regarding the above-mentioned circumstances, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the Burmese government to 'desist from any action that could endanger the lives of civilians living in the area or further intensify the conflict in the region' and 'to work toward political reconciliation'.¹⁷ He highlighted the seriousness of the outcome of the ongoing violence that caused 'large-scale displacement of civilians'. Additionally, he pointed out that 'timely access be provided for the delivery of aid to vulnerable communities' is crucial.¹⁸

<<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43714&Cr=myanmar&Cr1=#.UPZi1KHXICc>> [Accessed 16 January 2013].

¹⁰ Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) 2012, 'Myanmar: Kachin fighting hits IDP health', *Integrated Regional Information Networks*, 15 November, <<http://www.irinnews.org/report/96785/MYANMAR-Kachin-fighting-hits-IDP-health>> [accessed 16 January 2013]

¹¹ Hodal, K 2013, 'Burma steps up military offensive against Kachin rebels', *The Guardian*, 14 January, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/14/burma-military-offensive-kachin-rebels>> [accessed 16 January 2013]

¹² The United Nations News Centre 2012, 'Myanmar: UN official urges stepped-up efforts to address humanitarian issues causing instability', *The United Nations*, 6 December, <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43701#.UPdaQ6HXICc>> [Accessed 16 January 2013].

¹³ The United Nations News Centre 2012, 'UN relief chief asks Myanmar Government to allow aid deliveries in off-limits area', *The United Nations*, 7 December, <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43714&Cr=myanmar&Cr1=#.UPZi1KHXICc>> [Accessed 16 January 2013].

¹⁴ Reuters 2012, 'Up to 10,000 Myanmar refugees seek refuge in China', *The Asahi Shimbun*, 8 February, <<http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/china/AJ201202080073>> [Accessed 16 January 2013].

¹⁵ IRIN 2012, 'Myanmar: Growing number of Kachin IDPs', *Integrated Regional Information Networks*, 29 October, <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/508faf082.html>> [accessed 16 January 2013]

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ The United Nations Secretary-General (SG/SM/14750) 2013, 'Taking 'serious note' of reported air strikes in Myanmar, Secretary-General urges end to actions that could endanger civilians, intensify conflict', *the United Nations*, 2 January <<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sgsm14750.doc.htm>> [13 Jan. 2013].

¹⁸ Ibid.

On 17th January 2013, President Thein Sein has ordered to stop military operation against KIA, however, it is reported that the Burmese military continues the military operation.¹⁹

HRN urges the Burmese government, no matter what reasons there might be, to stop any violence that can expose lives of civilians to dangers such as bombings or air strikes. HRN also demands the government to allow humanitarian aids access to vulnerable areas where civilians are facing the serious conditions, from the attacks by the Burmese military. It is not acceptable to conduct attacks based on the claim that it was a self-defense act when tens of thousands of civilians' lives have been severely affected by the violence.

Further, HRN calls for the U.N. to strengthen the monitoring of the worsening situation in the area. Human rights abuses must not go unchecked and those who are responsible for the crimes must be tried and punished accordingly. The deteriorating situation in Burma needs immediate attention.

¹⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21107440>