

BURMA BULLETIN

XXXXXXXX A month-in-review of events in Burma XXXXXXXX

ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

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- **Global leaders say that violations targeting Rohingya may amount to crimes against humanity and genocide.**
- **A Rohingya Muslim is beheaded in Arakan/Rakhine state and two Kachin Baptist priests are missing in Shan state, after assisting journalists.**
- **Clashes continue in Shan State with hundreds of villagers forced to flee fighting.**
- **The Shan State government approves a proposal to brand four ethnic armed groups as “terrorists”.**
- **A township court in Taunggyi sentences 72 farmers to a month in prison for continuing to till land confiscated by the Tatmadaw.**
- **The Ministry of Defense receives the biggest share in the approved supplementary budget for all ministries.**
- **More people are charged for alleged defamation under the Telecommunications Law.**
- **Court denies bail for Eleven Media Group’s EO and chief editor despite health problems.**

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KEY STORY

Burma/Myanmar’s anti-Rohingya campaign ‘may amount to crime against humanity’ and ‘genocide’

On 16 December, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) reported it was receiving daily reports of rapes and killings of the Rohingya minority in the Arakan/Rakhine State.¹ About 21,000 Rohingya fled from Arakan State to Bangladesh [see *Reports*] since the security crackdown began in early October [see *October Bulletin*].²

¹ OHCHR (16 Dec 16) “Callous” approach to northern Rakhine may have grave repercussions – Zeid; DVB (17 Dec 16) UN says it gets reports daily of killings and rapes in Arakan

² HRW (13 Dec 16) Burma: Military Burned Villages in Rakhine State

Amnesty International said that the actions of the Tatmadaw—including allegations of rape and use of helicopter gunships to fire randomly on villages in Arakan State—may constitute “crimes against humanity”.³ Twenty-three Nobel laureates criticized fellow peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi for not taking any initiative to ensure full and equal citizenship rights for the Rohingya Muslims and warned that the Tatmadaw’s actions might amount to “ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity”.⁴ On 4 December, Malaysian PM Najib Razak called the persecution of Burma/Myanmar’s Rohingya Muslims a “genocide” at a Malaysian government-led protest rally.⁵

Burma’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Kyaw Tin summoned Malaysian Ambassador Mohd Haniff Bin Abd Rahman to express dismay over Najib’s remarks.⁶ On 6 December, the Ministry of Immigration temporarily banned Burmese workers from going to Malaysia.⁷ Former UN Sec-Gen Kofi Annan, chair of the Arakan Advisory Commission formed by Aung San Suu Kyi, said that he would not describe the violence committed against the Rohingya minority as “genocide”.⁸ State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi blamed the international community for fueling resentment between Buddhists and Muslims in the Arakan State.⁹

On 1 December, President Htin Kyaw formed the Arakan State commission to investigate deadly attacks in northern Arakan State. President Htin Kyaw assigned Vice-President Myint Swe to lead the commission and identify the background and causes of the attacks in Maungdaw Township, and investigate deaths, injuries, destruction, and other damage.¹⁰ On 14 December, the Arakan State Commission said that government authorities followed the law and acted legally in their response to the attackers.¹¹

Related developments:

05 Dec: Dozens went missing and were feared drowned after a boat packed with Rohingya Muslims trying to reach Bangladesh sank in a border river.¹² A Rohingya source said that bodies of 13 women and children, two of which had bullet wounds, were washed ashore in his village on Burma/Myanmar’s side of the Naf.¹³ The Bangladesh police and border guards said that they were not aware of the disaster.¹⁴

05 Dec: Commander-in-Chief Sen Gen Min Aung Hlaing met with his Malaysian counterpart Gen Zulkifeli Mohd Zin in Naypyidaw and rejected allegations of human rights abuses in Arakan/Rakhine State.¹⁵

12 Dec: State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi convened a special meeting of foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to discuss the ongoing crisis in northern Arakan State.¹⁶ During the meeting, Malaysian FM Anifah Aman said that the plight of Rohingya Muslims in Burma was a regional concern and called for ASEAN to coordinate humanitarian aid and investigate alleged atrocities committed against the Rohingya Muslims.¹⁷ Malaysia’s intervention in the Arakan crisis marked a break with ASEAN members’ policy of non-interference in each other’s internal affairs.¹⁸

³ BBC (19 Dec 16) Amnesty accuses Myanmar military of ‘crimes against humanity’; The Guardian (19 Dec 16) Myanmar’s Rohingya campaign ‘may be crime against humanity’

⁴ The Independent (30 Dec 16) Nobel laureates criticise peace prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi over ‘ethnic cleansing’ of Burma’s Rohingya Muslims; The Guardian (30 Dec 16) Nobel laureates warn Aung San Suu Kyi over ‘ethnic cleansing’ of Rohingya

⁵ The Guardian (04 Dec 16) Malaysia PM urges world to act against ‘genocide’ of Myanmar’s Rohingya

⁶ RFA (15 Dec 16) Malaysia Ready to Talk with Myanmar About Rohingya Abuses

⁷ Frontier Myanmar (07 Dec 16) Myanmar bans workers going to Malaysia as refugee crisis grows

⁸ BBC (06 Dec 16) Kofi Annan downplays claims of Myanmar genocide

⁹ The Guardian (03 Dec 16) Aung San Suu Kyi accuses international community of stoking unrest in Myanmar

¹⁰ Irrawaddy (02 Dec 16) State-Level Arakan Investigation Commission Formed

¹¹ Reuters (14 Dec 16) Myanmar government ‘following the law’ in Rakhine, probe panel says

¹² Mizzima (06 Dec 16) Dozens of Rohingya missing as boat sinks near Bangladesh

¹³ Mizzima (06 Dec 16) Dozens of Rohingya missing as boat sinks near Bangladesh

¹⁴ Mizzima (06 Dec 16) Dozens of Rohingya missing as boat sinks near Bangladesh

¹⁵ DVB (06 Dec 16) No mea culpa as Min Aung Hlaing meets Malaysian counterpart

¹⁶ Frontier Myanmar (13 Dec 16) Myanmar calls ASEAN talks over Rakhine crackdown

¹⁷ Reuters (19 Dec 16) Malaysia calls for ASEAN to coordinate aid for Myanmar’s Rohingya

¹⁸ Reuters (19 Dec 16) Malaysia calls for ASEAN to coordinate aid for Myanmar’s Rohingya

12 Dec: Brig Gen Thura San Lwin, the newly-installed Border Police Force Commander in Arakan State's Maungdaw Township, pledged to end security operations in local Rohingya communities if they help the authorities recover the firearms stolen by armed assailants during the 9 October attacks on border police outposts.¹⁹

14 Dec: The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture announced that it is going to publish "a book of true Myanmar history" to prove that the Rohingya community is not an indigenous group of Burma/Myanmar.²⁰ The ministry announced that this is to refute foreigners who "stir things up by insisting the Rohingya exist and (who) aim to tarnish Myanmar's political image".²¹

15 Dec: The International Crisis Group (ICG) said that a group calling itself Harakah al-Yakin, with links to Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, headed the Rohingya Muslims who attacked Burmese border guards in October [see *Reports*].²²

15 Dec: Members of the European Parliament condemned the Tatmadaw's "disproportionate use of force" in the violent clashes in northern Arakan State.²³ The European Parliament resolution also urged the Tatmadaw "to stop immediately the killings, harassment and rapes of the Rohingya people, and the burning of their homes".²⁴

1 Rohingya Muslim beheaded, 2 priests missing after assisting journalists

On 23 December, the headless body of a Rohingya Muslim man, identified to be Shuna Mya from Maungdaw Township, was found floating in a river, days after he spoke with Burmese reporters who were on a government-guided tour in the area.²⁵ Shuna Mya told the reporters about atrocities committed by the Tatmadaw during the clearance operations.²⁶ The State Counsellor's Office said that Shuna Mya was beheaded after denying accusations of arson, rape or arbitrary arrests committed by the Tatmadaw.²⁷ A Rohingya community leader told Reuters that many Muslims were skeptical about the government's report of the incident.²⁸

On 24 December, two Kachin Baptist priests Dom Dawng Nawng Latt and La Jaw Gam Hseng disappeared after guiding local journalists who reported about Burmese airstrikes that damaged St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Muse township, Shan state, on 3 December, during fierce fighting between the Tatmadaw and the Northern Alliance [see *Ethnic Affairs and Conflict*].²⁹ A journalist from *The Irrawaddy* said that the Mong Ko township administrator asked him not to publish the photographs of the damaged church days before the photographs surfaced online.³⁰

DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE

Shan State government labels four ethnic armed groups as "terrorists"

On 7 December, the Shan State legislature passed an urgent proposal to label as "terrorists" the four members of the Northern Alliance fighting with the Tatmadaw in the northern Shan State—Kachin Independence Army (KIA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), Myanmar National Democratic

¹⁹ DVB (12 Dec 16) Police commander ties end of Arakan crackdown to stolen guns' return

²⁰ Bangkok Post (14 Dec 16) Myanmar to 'prove' to Asean Rohingya are not indigenous

²¹ Mizzima (14 Dec 16) Ministry to write Myanmar's 'true history' without Rohingya

²² DVB (15 Dec 16) Saudi, Pakistani links to Rohingya militants: ICG

²³ European Parliament (15 Dec 16) European Parliament resolution of 15 December 2016 on the situation of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar (2016/3027(RSP))

²⁴ European Parliament (15 Dec 16) European Parliament resolution of 15 December 2016 on the situation of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar (2016/3027(RSP))

²⁵ BBC (23 Dec 16) Myanmar unrest: Rohingya Muslim man found decapitated in river

²⁶ RFA (23 Dec 16) Headless Body of Muslim Who Spoke to Journalists Found in Myanmar's Maungdaw

²⁷ RFA (23 Dec 16) Headless Body of Muslim Who Spoke to Journalists Found in Myanmar's Maungdaw

²⁸ Reuters (26 Dec 16) Myanmar says Muslim with links to government murdered in troubled Rakhine

²⁹ DVB (04 Jan 17) 2 priests still missing in Mongko; Christian Post (02 Jan 17) Two Priests Go Missing After Helping Reports Cover Church Bombing in Burma; HRW (16 Jan 17) Burma: Kachin Christians Feared 'Disappeared'; Irrawaddy (23 Dec 16) Bishop Says Mong Ko Church Damaged by Government Air Strikes

³⁰ HRW (16 Jan 17) Burma: Kachin Christians Feared 'Disappeared'

Alliance Army (MNDAA) and the Arakan Army (AA).³¹ All eight signatories of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) denounced the parliamentary motions to label the ethnic armed group as terrorists and said that such a move could harm the ongoing peace process.³²

On 2 December, MP Maung Thin attempted to pass a similar proposal in the Lower House of the Union Parliament but the proposal was not approved.³³

Ministry of Defense gets the biggest share of the supplementary budget

On 14 December, the Union Parliament approved supplementary budgets to cover the remaining five months of the 2016-17 fiscal year.³⁴ The Union Parliament cut about K69 billion (US\$52 million) or 5.1% of the supplementary budget request amounting to more than K1.3 trillion (almost US\$1 billion).³⁵

The military-run Ministry of Defense received the biggest amount of the supplementary budget.³⁶ In January 2016, the Ministry of Defense received more than 14% of the total budget.³⁷ The parliamentary approval of the supplementary budget meant that it will get an additional US\$75 million to spend before the end of March 2017.³⁸

Other developments:

15 Dec: The Union Parliament approved the ratification of the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP).³⁹ Burma was the fourth ASEAN member-state to ratify the Convention, after Cambodia, Singapore and Thailand.⁴⁰ The Convention would take effect 30 days after a sixth ASEAN member-state submits the Instrument of Ratification.⁴¹

ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND CONFLICT

Clashes continue between the Tatmadaw and NCA signatories against the Northern Alliance

In December, hostilities continued following the attack of the Northern Alliance—a coalition composed of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), together with the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), and the Arakan Army (AA)—on police and military outposts in November [see *November Bulletin*] During the month of December at least seven clashes were recorded between the Tatmadaw and NCA signatories against the Northern Alliance including:

- **6 Dec:** The Tatmadaw launched mortar and air strikes and retook the town of Mongko in northern Shan State from the control of the Northern Alliance groups, leaving four civilians dead and 63 others injured.⁴² At least 5,000 were displaced by the fighting, including more than 3,600 who fled to the border.⁴³

³¹ DVB (07 Dec 16) Shan State MPs vote to designate Northern Alliance 'terrorists'

³² DVB (12 Dec 16) NCA signatories denounce 'terrorist' labelling

³³ Myanmar Times (05 Dec 16) 'Terrorist' label for alliance voted down

³⁴ Myanmar Times (15 Dec 16) Defence takes biggest slice of greenlit supplementary budget

³⁵ Irrawaddy (14 Dec 16) Defense Ministry Gets Lion's Share of Supplementary Budget

³⁶ Myanmar Times (15 Dec 16) Defence takes biggest slice of greenlit supplementary budget

³⁷ Irrawaddy (14 Dec 16) Defense Ministry Gets Lion's Share of Supplementary Budget

³⁸ Irrawaddy (14 Dec 16) Defense Ministry Gets Lion's Share of Supplementary Budget

³⁹ Irrawaddy (15 Dec 16) Burma's Parliament Ratifies Asean Anti-Trafficking Convention

⁴⁰ Irrawaddy (15 Dec 16) Burma's Parliament Ratifies Asean Anti-Trafficking Convention

⁴¹ Irrawaddy (15 Dec 16) Burma's Parliament Ratifies Asean Anti-Trafficking Convention

⁴² DVB (06 Dec 16) Air strikes near Mongko kill 3 civilians: local group

⁴³ Myanmar Times (06 Dec 16) Mong Koe back in Tatmadaw control after air strikes

- **12 Dec:** Tatmadaw troops from Infantry Battalions (IB) 55 and 20 clashed with the Arakan Army's (AA) Brigade 3 IB 314 in upper Paletwa Township, Chin State, with some 200 people displaced.⁴⁴
- **18 Dec:** The Tatmadaw seized Gidon, an important Kachin Independence Army (KIA) mountain outpost close to the KIA's headquarters at Laiza on the Chinese border, during a bout of intense fighting in Kachin State.⁴⁵
- **20 Dec:** The nationwide ceasefire agreement (NCA) signatory Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) clashed with the non-signatory TNLA forces in Pang Long village, Namtu Township, leaving one woman dead and three others injured.⁴⁶ At least 3,000 villagers who fled their homes took shelter in the towns of Hsipaw and Namtu.⁴⁷
- **22 Dec:** Three days of clashes between the SSA-S and the TNLA forces across several villages in Shan State's Namtu Township killed one 17-year old girl and displaced hundreds of civilians.⁴⁸
- **26 Dec:** The Tatmadaw clashed with the TNLA near Naung Maung village in Kyaukme Township.⁴⁹ Three civilians were reportedly killed while eight villagers---including three children, two women and three monks---were injured amid clashes.⁵⁰ More than 150 villagers fled to camps in Kyaukme Township.⁵¹
- **27 Dec:** The Tatmadaw captured the KIA outpost in Lai Hpawng and six surrounding smaller outposts in Kachin State's Waingmaw Township, forcing around 2,600 internally displaced persons (IDPs) to flee to nearby camps.⁵²

The United Nations reported that up to 15,000 people fled across Burma/Myanmar's border into China in December as fighting between the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed groups intensifies.⁵³ Since 20 November, around 2,400 people were internally displaced in northern Shan State after the Northern Alliance groups launched an offensive against police and military outposts [see *November Bulletin*].⁵⁴

On 4 December, the Northern Alliance groups outlined their demands, including mediation by China, in order to end the current hostilities.⁵⁵ The Peace Commission, established by the government on 11 July to facilitate the ongoing peace talks, insisted that it would only hold one-on-one talks with each group while the Northern Alliance groups refused to meet individually.⁵⁶ On 21 December, the Northern Alliance groups again called for a peace dialogue with the government, but said that their demands remain unchanged.⁵⁷ Peace Commission member Aung Soe said that arrangements for the meeting are still ongoing.⁵⁸

Other developments:

⁴⁴ DVB (13 Dec 16) Arakan Army claims 10 kills against Tatmadaw in Paletwa; Myanmar Times (15 Dec 16) Chin State civilians flee Arakan Army, Tatmadaw fighting

⁴⁵ DVB (23 Dec 16) Kachin IDPs' woes grow with fall of KIA's Gidon outpost

⁴⁶ Irrawaddy (22 Dec 16) Ethnic Armed Groups Clash in Shan State, Killing One Civilian

⁴⁷ DVB (22 Dec 16) 3,000 IDPs sheltering in Hsipaw, Namtu

⁴⁸ Irrawaddy (22 Dec 16) Ethnic Armed Groups Clash in Shan State, Killing One Civilian; Myanmar Times (21 Dec 16) Hundreds flee renewed fighting between Shan, Ta'ang ethnic armed groups

⁴⁹ Myanmar Times (30 Dec 16) Civilians killed in fighting near Kyaukme

⁵⁰ Mizzima (28 Dec 16) Three civilians killed in Myanmar Army, TNLA clashes

⁵¹ Mizzima (31 Dec 16) Villagers escape to IDP camps in Shan State

⁵² Irrawaddy (28 Dec 16) Thousands Flee Burma Army Offensive in Kachin State

⁵³ Reuters (20 Dec 16) U.N. says 15,000 flee into China as Myanmar's army battles ethnic rebels

⁵⁴ Reuters (20 Dec 16) U.N. says 15,000 flee into China as Myanmar's army battles ethnic rebels

⁵⁵ Myanmar Times (06 Dec 16) Kunming ceasefire foray quickly falls apart

⁵⁶ Myanmar Times (06 Dec 16) Kunming ceasefire foray quickly falls apart

⁵⁷ Myanmar Times (20 Dec 16) Composition of negotiations still a sticking point for Northern Alliance

⁵⁸ Myanmar Times (20 Dec 16) Composition of negotiations still a sticking point for Northern Alliance

12 Dec: The Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) released 11 recently detained local villagers in Kyaukme Township, northern Shan State, after each signed a pledge denying any affiliation with the Shan State Army-South (SSA-S).⁵⁹ One Palaung youth was not released.⁶⁰

15 Dec: China's defense ministry said that it hopes that Burma/Myanmar would ensure peace and stability along their border and keep stray bullets out of its neighbor's territory following a four-day visit of China's western military district commander Zhao Zongqi in Burma.⁶¹ In November, China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang confirmed that "some stray bullets" crossed the Ruili River into Chinese territory, and wounded one Chinese national due to clashes in the northern Shan State [see *November Bulletin*].

16 Dec: Unexpected fighting took place near Taunggyi in Shan State involving the Tatmadaw and the SSA-S.⁶² There were no casualties or injuries.⁶³

19 Dec: MP Mai Win Htoo of the Ta'ang National Party proposed a bill to the Union Parliament inviting all ethnic groups to attend the second 21st Century Panglong Peace Conference in February.⁶⁴ The Parliament's office director rejected the proposal without allowing the issue to be debated or voted upon.⁶⁵

23 Dec: The State Counsellor's Office established the Joint Coordinating Body (JCB)—comprised of eight representatives from the government and another eight from the armed groups—to oversee expenditures related to the peace process.⁶⁶

HUMAN RIGHTS

More cases filed for alleged defamation under the Telecommunications Law

On 1 December, the Pegu/Bago Division police arrested a woman named Sandi Myint Aung for sharing online posts deemed to be insulting to State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi.⁶⁷ An unverified report of Irrawaddy found, in relation to Sandi Myint Aung's case, a Facebook post calling Aung San Suu Kyi an "old lady" and wishing for her death as she was unwell after her trip to US and Europe.⁶⁸

Since the Telecommunications Law was enacted in December 2013, 45 cases have been brought to the court. In December, the following cases were reported:⁶⁹

- **15 Dec:** Nyein Chan, a National League for Democracy (NLD) youth leader in Letpadan Township, Pegu Division, was charged with online defamation for allegedly slandering a municipal official on Facebook in July 2016.⁷⁰
- **28 Dec:** Two regional lawmakers from Rangoon/Yangon's Yankin Township sued a Rangoon resident for saying on Facebook that an NLD lawmaker had interfered in a case involving her housemaid to show off his power.⁷¹
- **28 Dec:** Salin Township Court sentenced civil servant Tun Min Latt to six-months' imprisonment for "writing and disseminating hate speech using profane language and trolling the State Counsellor on social media".⁷²

⁵⁹ DVB (14 Dec 16) TNLA releases 11 villagers from custody

⁶⁰ DVB (14 Dec 16) TNLA releases 11 villagers from custody

⁶¹ DVB (15 Dec 16) 'Stray bullets,' border stability worry Chinese military

⁶² RFA (16 Dec 16) Skirmishes Continue Between Myanmar Army And Ethnic Militias in Shan State

⁶³ RFA (16 Dec 16) Skirmishes Continue Between Myanmar Army And Ethnic Militias in Shan State

⁶⁴ Irrawaddy (19 Dec 16) Parliamentary Proposal to Invite All Ethnic Armed Groups to Peace Conference Rejected

⁶⁵ Irrawaddy (19 Dec 16) Parliamentary Proposal to Invite All Ethnic Armed Groups to Peace Conference Rejected

⁶⁶ Myanmar Times (23 Dec 16) Taskforce to manage donor-supplied peace fund

⁶⁷ Irrawaddy (01 Dec 16) Pegu Woman Charged With Defaming State Counselor on Social Media

⁶⁸ Irrawaddy (01 Dec 16) Pegu Woman Charged With Defaming State Counselor on Social Media

⁶⁹ Irrawaddy (28 Dec 16) Rangoon Resident Sued Under Controversial Defamation Laws

⁷⁰ DVB (16 Dec 16) NLD youth leader charged for slandering official on Facebook

⁷¹ Irrawaddy (28 Dec 16) Rangoon Resident Sued Under Controversial Defamation Laws

Court denies bail twice for Eleven Media Group executives

On 1 December, the Tarmwe Township Court rejected the November 25 application for bail of Eleven Media Group's (EMG) CEO and chief editor.⁷³ Judge Kay Thi Hlaing said that the defendants' medical records from private hospitals did not prove their health problems and required documentation from publicly-run hospitals.⁷⁴ She added that their lawyers failed to submit records from Insein Prison's hospital to prove that CEO Than Htut Aung suffered a heart attack in the prison on November 23.⁷⁵

On 22 December, the court rejected the CEO and chief editor of Eleven Media Group's (EMG) appeal for bail, even after they submitted a prison doctor's report.⁷⁶

On 27 December, EMG issued a public apology for accusing Rangoon/Yangon Division Chief Minister Phyo Min Thein of graft, "[w]ith an understanding that Eleven Media Group will abstain from doing similar things in future..."⁷⁷

EMG CEO Than Htut Aung and chief editor Wai Phyo are facing defamation charges for alleged violation of Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Act [see *November Bulletin*].

72 farmers jailed for tilling their confiscated land

On 22 December, a township court in Taunggyi, Shan State sentenced 72 farmers to one month in prison with hard labor for criminal trespass and vandalism charges filed by the Tatmadaw's Eastern Command. The Tatmadaw accused the 40 male and 32 female farmers of continuing to work on the 5,000 acres of land even after the Tatmadaw's confiscation while the farmers disputed Tatmadaw's land ownership. Six elderly farmers and a 17-year old girl were later allowed to pay a fine and be released. Khin Moe Moe, a lawyer for the group, said she would appeal the sentence and noted this was the first time that a single verdict had been issued against such a large number of farmers.⁷⁸

Other developments:

13 Dec: Soe Moe Tun, a reporter for the Eleven Media Group who covered sensitive topics such as illegal logging in Burma/Myanmar's northwest border region, was found beaten to death.⁷⁹ This is the fifth killing of a journalist since 1999.⁸⁰ The Myanmar Journalists' Association called on the authorities to "expose the truth behind this case and to give effective protection to journalists".⁸¹

20 Dec: The Dutch tourist who was sentenced to prison for unplugging an amplifier broadcasting a Buddhist sermon was released from Mandalay prison and was immediately deported after completing his three-month sentence [see *October Bulletin*].⁸²

NATURAL RESOURCES

Developments:

23 Dec: Villagers from Myaung Pyo village, Tenasserim Division accused a Thai-owned tin mining company of continuing mining operations in the area despite a regional order to stop operations during court proceedings.⁸³ The villagers filed a case against Myanmar Pongpipat in 2014 to seek

⁷² Mizzima (30 Dec 16) Civil servant sentenced to 6-month imprisonment under section 66(d)

⁷³ Myanmar Times (01 Dec 16) Bail denied for Eleven Media defendants

⁷⁴ Myanmar Times (01 Dec 16) Bail denied for Eleven Media defendants

⁷⁵ Myanmar Times (01 Dec 16) Bail denied for Eleven Media defendants

⁷⁶ Myanmar Times (23 Dec 16) Bail denied for Eleven Media CEO, editor

⁷⁷ Myanmar Times (27 Dec 16) Eleven Media apologizes for defamation-hit editorial

⁷⁸ Irrawaddy (23 Dec 16) Imprisoned Shan Farmers Will Appeal their Trespassing Convictions

⁷⁹ Reuters (13 Dec 16) Myanmar reporter who covered logging industry found beaten to death

⁸⁰ Reuters (13 Dec 16) Myanmar reporter who covered logging industry found beaten to death

⁸¹ Reuters (13 Dec 16) Myanmar reporter who covered logging industry found beaten to death

⁸² Myanmar Times (23 Dec 16) Dutch tourist released from Mandalay prison, deported

⁸³ DVB (23 Dec 16) Tenasserim villagers take Heinda mine battle to Supreme Court

compensation for the mining operations' negative impact on the community and the environment.⁸⁴ The case is still pending with the Special Appeals Bench of the Union Supreme Court.⁸⁵

30 Dec: Two freelance jade pickers were buried under rubble and were presumed dead, while 11 were injured after a jade mine landslide in Hpakant, Kachin State.⁸⁶

DISPLACEMENT

Repatriated refugees asked to pay less for housing

On 5 December, the Burma/Myanmar government agreed that the first batch of repatriated refugees from the Thai-Burmese border would be allowed to pay a lower upfront payment to purchase housing.⁸⁷ Upfront payments will now vary from K1 to 4 million (US\$742 to US\$2,969) depending on the individual families' circumstances.⁸⁸ Initially, the government asked the former refugees to pay 30% of the total cost upfront, making housing unaffordable for them, and forcing them to seek shelter in an NGO warehouse [see *November Bulletin*].

Burma/Myanmar promises to repatriate 2,415 refugees from Bangladesh

On 30 December, Burma/Myanmar said that it would take back 2,415 Burmese citizens from Bangladesh—only a small fraction of the 300,000 Burmese, which Bangladesh claimed to be taking refuge in the country.⁸⁹ Burma's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Director General Kyaw Zaya said that the ministry stands by its data and that he had no idea about the Bangladesh figure of 300,000.⁹⁰

REPORTS ON BURMA RELEASED IN DECEMBER

“Burma: Military Burned Villages in Rakhine State” Human Rights Watch <https://goo.gl/S6sTp7>

“Burma: Rohingya Recount Killings, Rape, and Arson” Human Rights Watch <https://goo.gl/6hsQuh>

“Durable Peace Programme: Baseline Report” Oxfam <https://goo.gl/0r4PLH>

“ECHO Factsheet The Rohingya crisis – December 2016” European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations <https://goo.gl/0xz9hg>

“Hidden Plight: Christian Minorities in Burma [EN/MY]” Government of the United States of America <https://goo.gl/8ZwIjk>

“Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State” International Crisis Group <https://goo.gl/wqc9oh>

“Myanmar Humanitarian Needs Overview 2017” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs <https://goo.gl/P7Ct5g>

“OCHA Update - Humanitarian situation in the northern part of Rakhine State, Myanmar - 13 December 2016” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs <https://goo.gl/ySRG1N>

“Suspended in Time: The Ongoing Persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Burma [EN/MY]” Government of the United States of America <https://goo.gl/fnKQPt>

⁸⁴ DVB (23 Dec 16) Tenasserim villagers take Heinda mine battle to Supreme Court

⁸⁵ DVB (23 Dec 16) Tenasserim villagers take Heinda mine battle to Supreme Court

⁸⁶ DVB (30 Dec 16) 2 killed, 11 injured in Hpakant jade mine landslide

⁸⁷ Irrawaddy (05 Dec 16) Refugee Returnees, Govt Reach Housing Agreement

⁸⁸ Irrawaddy (05 Dec 16) Refugee Returnees, Govt Reach Housing Agreement

⁸⁹ Reuters (30 Dec 16) Myanmar says it will take back 2,415 citizens from Bangladesh

⁹⁰ Reuters (30 Dec 16) Myanmar says it will take back 2,415 citizens from Bangladesh