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Shan Women's Action Network

Press release

10 November 2010

SWAN denounces Burma Army build-up and rape in central Shan State

SWAN strongly denounces the Burma Army build-up around the Shan ceasefire area in Ke See township, central Shan State, which led to the rape of a young disabled woman on the eve of the November 7 election.

Since November 3, more than 1,000 new troops have been deployed from other parts of Shan State to areas adjacent to territory of the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) First Brigade. These troops have been conducting patrols and hunting out villagers suspected of supporting the SSA-N 1st Brigade, which refused to become a Border Guard Force under the Burma Army.

On November 6, a fully armed 10-man patrol from Mong Nawng-based LIB 286, led by Major Win Zaw Latt, searched the village of Wan Nawng New, about five miles north of Mong Nawng. One of the troops raped a 25-year-old disabled woman who was alone in her house with her two-year-old niece.

The soldier tied up the woman's hands and feet, and then bound her hair to one of the house posts before raping her. Neighbours heard her screams but did not dare come to her aid until after the patrol had left the village. No one dared complain about the crime, and the woman herself has fled the village in fear of repercussions.

SWAN is gravely concerned at the fate of this woman, and of other civilians in this area, who are being deliberately targeted under this new military campaign against the SSA-N.

SWAN has repeatedly documented the systematic use of sexual violence by the Burma Army, and is appalled that even just before the election, when the eyes of the entire world were on Burma, troops dared openly commit rape. This is a clear sign that the impunity enjoyed by the Burma Army for sexual violence is set to continue.

“We strongly urge the international community not to recognize the Burmese generals' new proxy government,” said SWAN spokesperson Nang Moan Kaein. “It is tantamount to legitimizing the Burma Army's crimes, and will condemn women in Burma to continued systematic sexual violence.”

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