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Update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

Government troops attack Ta'ang village in Lashio, killing two villagers, one mentally disabled, on Burma's Independence Day

On January 4, 2016, Burma's Independence Day -- celebrated with military parades in Naypyidaw and Yangon -- government troops attacked a Ta'ang village in Lashio township, northern Shan State, killing two villagers, including one who was mentally disabled.

At about 5 pm on January 4, 2016, about 20 Burmese government troops from Infantry Battalions 213 and 217 in Mong Kyet arrived at the remote mountaintop village of Wan Parng Lom, Nar Nang tract, Lashio township. The village has over 40 households, with about 200 ethnic Ta'ang inhabitants.

As the soldiers entered the village, they began firing their guns, both in the air and directly at villagers. Two villagers were shot and killed in front of their houses. Their names were:

1. Aik Sarm, aged 30, mentally disabled; son of the village headman
2. Aik Hla, aged 38

Aik Sarm's brother, Aik Zam, was inside his house and saw his brother being hit by several bullets in the chest and back.

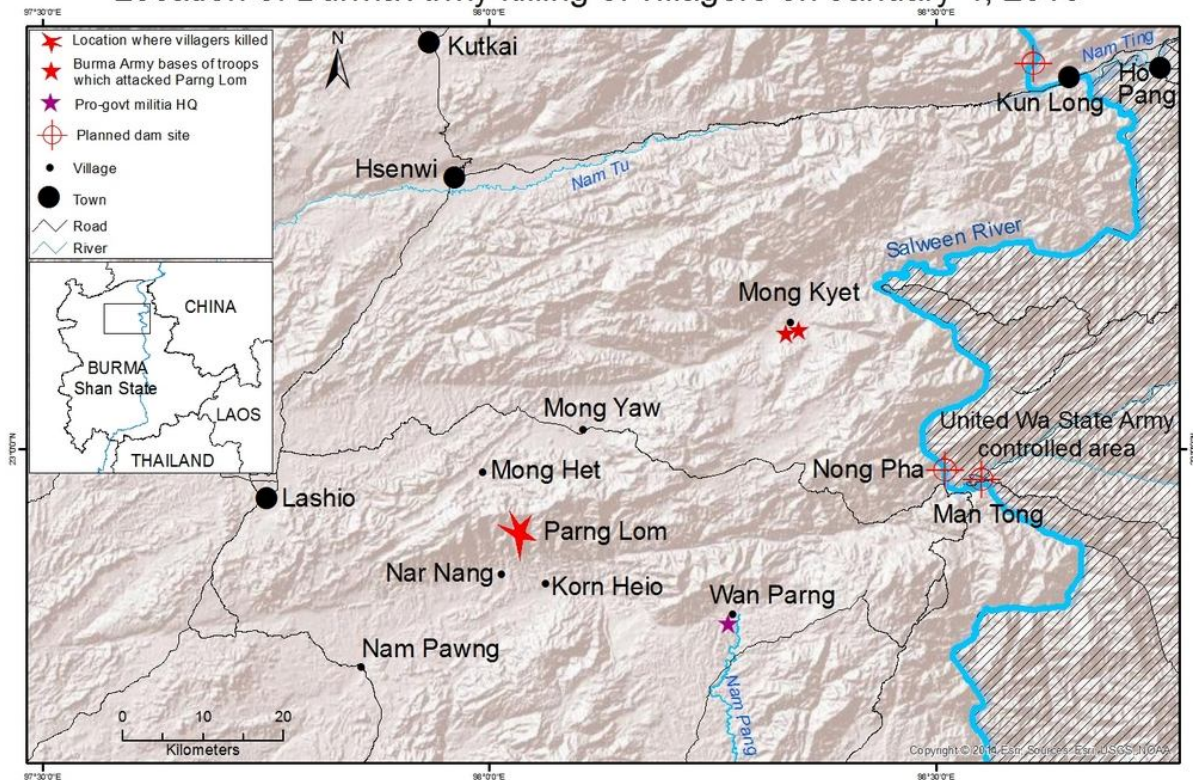
As the soldiers went through the village, they arrested two teenage boys on the road, and took them to the village temple, where a novice ordination had been held the same day. The 70-year-old village headman, Loong Htwe, was at the temple with several other villagers. When he saw the soldiers bringing the boys to the temple, he told the troops that they were not soldiers, and should not be arrested. The soldiers then released the boys, but arrested the headman, and another villager at the temple, and took them away.

The two arrested villagers are:

1. Loong Htwe, aged 70, the village headman
2. Aik Sarm, aged 40

The soldiers fired four mortar shells from the temple into surrounding areas.

Location of Burma Army killing of villagers on January 4, 2016



Although many of the villagers had fled during the attack on their village, some remained in the village, and saw the Burmese soldiers that evening burying the bodies of the two villagers who had been shot. They dug a hole in front of Aik Sarm's house, and buried the two bodies there. On January 6, the troops left the village.

On January 7, another four truckloads of government troops, from Mong Kyet as well as from Infantry Battalion 291 in Nam Pawng, soldiers from the local "Wan Parng" pro-government militia, and administrative officer Sai Mya Tun from Wan Daw Nay village, arrived in Parg Lom village. On January 8, they dug up the bodies of the two men, and took them to be buried outside the village. That same day, they all left, and the militia ordered the villagers who were still sheltering outside the village to return to their homes.

The two villagers who were arrested by the Burma Army on January 4 are still missing. Their whereabouts are unknown.

SHRF deplors the ongoing deliberate targeting of civilians by government troops, who are continuing to launch military operations in ethnic areas even amidst national peace negotiations.

One of the likely reasons for the increased military operations in this area is that the Burmese government is planning a large hydropower project, the Nong Pha dam, on the Salween River to the east of Lashio. 90% of the power from the 1,200 MW dam, a joint project with Hydrochina Corporation, will be exported to China.



Parng Lom village from Google earth

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