

EXTERNAL

AI Index: ASA 03/05/96

6 November 1996

Further information on EXTRA 158/96 (ASA 39/07/96, 15 October 1996) and follow-up (ASA 39/08/96, 28 October) - Refoulement / Fear of refoulement and new concern: Fear of ill-treatment

THAILAND/MYANMAR Forcible return of Burmese refugees to Myanmar

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new name: Ah Bo, aged 42

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On 2 November 1996 Thai Rangers again repatriated a group of 185 Lahu and Akha refugees to Myanmar. The group of villagers have fled Myanmar three times in October, following raids by the Myanmar army on Ban Ai Long village, Shan State, on 10, 20 and 31 October. On each occasion they have been repatriated after two days by Thai Rangers. Amnesty International fears that the villagers remain at risk of arbitrary detention and possible ill-treatment in Myanmar, and that Ah Bo, a Lahu male villager detained during the army raid of 20 October, may be facing ill-treatment in custody. His current whereabouts are unknown.

Thai Rangers from Pa Sang Nangern Camp, northern Chiang Rai province, had previously repatriated the group on 12 October (see original EXTRA). The commander of Myanmar army battalion 256 reportedly gave Thai Rangers written assurances that he guaranteed the group's safety and that his troops would not persecute them further. However, on 20 October 60 Myanmar army soldiers raided Ban Ai Long village for the second time, interrogated villagers, threatened them with violence, and detained Ah Bo. Following the raid, villagers fled to Thailand, only to be repatriated two nights later by Thai Rangers. Rangers reportedly ensured that the Myanmar army battalion had left the village before they sent the group back. A further Myanmar army raid on the village took place on 31 October. Villagers had received advance warning of the raid and returned to Thailand, from where they were again repatriated by Thai Rangers on 2 November. On this occasion rangers also reportedly ensured that the Myanmar army battalion had left the village before the refugees were returned.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express/airmail letters in English or your own language to:**

**1. THAI AUTHORITIES**

- noting that the Royal Thai Government is bound by the internationally-recognized principle of *non-refoulement*, which prohibits states from returning refugees against their will to countries where they risk serious human rights violations;
- expressing concern that each time the Thai authorities have returned the group of Ban Ai Long villagers to Myanmar, the village has subsequently been raided by the Myanmar army;
- calling on the Thai authorities to seek assurances from the Myanmar authorities of Ah Bo's safety;
- calling on the Thai authorities to halt the forcible return of Burmese refugees and to grant them the necessary protection.

**APPEALS TO:**

Banharn Silapa-archa, Prime Minister and Minister of Interior  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Government House

Nakhorn Pathom Road  
Bangkok 10300, Thailand  
**Telegrams: Prime Minister, Bangkok, Thailand**  
**Faxes: + 66 2 280 1443; 282 5131**  
**Salutation: Dear Prime Minister**

General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh  
Minister of Defence  
Ministry of Defence  
Sanamchai road  
Bangkok 10200, Thailand  
**Telegrams: Defence Minister, Bangkok, Thailand**  
**Faxes: + 66 2 226 4371**  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of THAILAND accredited to your country.

## **2. MYANMAR AUTHORITIES**

- urging the authorities to clarify the whereabouts of Ah Bo, and to either charge him with a recognized criminal offence or release him immediately;
- seeking assurances that he will not be subjected to ill-treatment or torture during detention;
- calling for immediate measures to prevent the Myanmar army's continued harassment and arbitrary detention of the villagers of Ban Ai Long, Shan State, Eastern Myanmar.

### **APPEALS TO**

**General Than Shwe**  
Chairman  
State Law and Order Restoration Council  
Ministry of Defence  
Signal Pagoda Road  
Yangon, Union of Myanmar  
**Telegrams: General Than Shwe, Yangon, Myanmar**  
**Telexes: 21316**  
**Salutation: Dear General**

Chairman  
Shan State Law and Order Restoration Council  
Taunggyi  
Shan State  
Union of Myanmar  
**Telegrams; Chairman, SLORC, Taunggyi, Shan, Myanmar**  
**Salutation: Dear Chairman**

Brigadier General Tin Htut  
Commander of Eastern Military Command  
Eastern Military Command  
Taunggyi  
Shan State  
Union of Myanmar  
**Telegrams: Commander, Eastern Military Command, Taunggyi, Shan, Myanmar**  
**Salutation: Dear Brigadier General**

**COPIES TO:** diplomatic representatives of MYANMAR accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 December 1996.