

PUBLIC

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UA 128/06 Fear of torture/extra-judicial executions/Forcible relocation

MYANMAR Thousands of ethnic minority civilians in Kayin State

Ethnic minority villagers in northern Kayin (Karen) state and in the east of an area known as Bago Division, in eastern Myanmar, are at risk of human rights violations following a recent escalation in counter-insurgency operations against the Karen National Union (KNU) by the Myanmar army. Reports indicate that civilians have been forcibly relocated and that several civilians, including women and children, may have been extra-judicially killed. Individuals are also reported to have been tortured by the army.

The KNU is one of the last remaining armed ethnic minority opposition groups fighting against the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), Myanmar's military government. Reports suggest that counter-insurgency operations will continue to intensify. The Myanmar authorities stated in April 2006 that the government has taken "security measures" against the KNU and that places where "destructive elements" can hide were being cleared, although further details have not been provided by the authorities at this time.

For several weeks, thousands of civilians have reportedly been fleeing their homes to hide in the forest or seek asylum in Thailand. In the ongoing military operations in Kayin state, villages have reportedly been attacked and ordered by the Myanmar army, or *tatmadaw*, to relocate as part of the army's tactics to break alleged links between armed opposition groups and the local civilian population. Some individuals have reportedly been warned that the army will exercise a shoot-on-sight policy against those who attempt to return. In addition, the army has reportedly destroyed houses, livestock and crops, depriving people of food and shelter.

Background Information

Widespread human rights violations, including torture, rape and extrajudicial executions, have taken place for years in ethnic minority areas in Myanmar in the context of counter-insurgency operations. Notably, the military has also required ethnic minority civilians to take part in forced labour duties and has confiscated land, crops and livestock.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- Expressing concern about the forcible relocation of thousands of Karen civilians and urging that in accordance with international law no-one is relocated unless for their own security or imperative military reasons;
- Expressing concern at reports that the army has extra-judicially killed and/or tortured individuals in Karen state in the context of ongoing counter-insurgency operations;
- urging that the army abide by the basic principles of international human rights and humanitarian law, concerning the treatment of civilians and all persons taking no active part in hostilities;
- urging that authorities issue clear orders to the army to halt extra-judicial executions and torture

APPEALS TO:

General Than Shwe, Chairman State Peace and Development Council, Minister of Defence
c/o Ministry of Defence
Ahlanpya Phaya Street
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear General

COPIES TO:

Major General Ko Ko
Commander of Southern Command
c/o Ministry of Defence
Ahlanpya Phaya Street
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear Major General

Major General Soe Naing
Commander, South-East command
State Peace and Development Council
c/o Ministry of Defence
Ahlanpya Phaya Street
Yangon
Union of Myanmar
Salutation: Dear Major General

and 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 20 June 2006.