



10 October 2018

## **Statement by Shan State Women's Organizations on Alarming Deterioration of Peace, and Security as it Relates to the Human Rights Situation and Rule of Law in Shan State**

The Lahu Women's Organization, the Pa-O Women's Union, the Shan Women's Action Network and the Ta'ang Women's Organization are very concerned about the ongoing armed conflict between the Myanmar Army and Ethnic Armed Organizations (EAOs) as well as fighting among EAOs in Shan State and across Burma. We are appalled by the impact of these conflicts, which has resulted in an increase of IDPs and refugees, and a notable disregard for human rights violations. The absence of rule of law has intensified conflicts among different communities and sown divisions and ethnic hatred through the spread of social media. We strongly condemn all parties and individuals involved in these acts.

All ethnic people living in Shan State have been suffering from the following:

- Ongoing fighting between the Myanmar Army and EAOs - despite the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) at the Union level and bilateral agreements at the State level
- Fighting between the TNLA and RCSS soon after the signing of NCA in 2015 among EAOs in Shan State and across Burma
- Military tension beginning in July 2017 and active fighting between the Northern Alliance and RCSS from August and early September 2018
- Military tension between Shan EAOs: RCSS and SSPP, which has led to active clashes
- Failure on behalf of the Myanmar Government's law enforcement bodies to protect civilians by promoting a flawed system of impunity

The people of Shan State are suffering as a result of ongoing fighting and tension between the armed groups. Civilians are not a target and yet:

- Thousands of people have been forcibly displaced
- Soldiers have been forcibly recruited using various methods by armed groups
- Grave human rights violations have been committed including arbitrary and unreasonable arrests, detention, torture, killing and forced disappearances that have blocked and restricted movements
- Forcibly entering and searching civilian's homes, destroying and burning properties and beating occupants
- Ill incitement to sow tensions between ethnic groups and as such creating racial hatred, divisions and conflicts between communities
- Continued violence against women and girls including sexual violence



@LaHu-Women-Organization



@PaOwomenunion



@swan.shanwomen



@taangwomenorganization



The incident that took place last week on October 5 around 6:30 pm has proven there is no rule of law in Shan State when a well-respected abbot of Shwe Kyin Monastery in Kyaukme, Northern Shan State, U Kalaya Wuntha was shot dead at his home by two unknown gunmen.

There has been increased incitement both organized and unintentional by various means, in particular through social media to widen the divisions, increase misunderstanding and tension to create more conflict among the ethnic communities, CSOs, human rights organizations, and political parties in Shan State who have different political positions and ideologies. The acts that have taken place in recent months target ethnic groups by circulating hate mail that blame and divide various women and youth organizations.

It is our understanding that all armed groups in Shan State and Burma are formed with the intention to protect and promote life, freedom and possession of its respected civilians. However, we feel very disheartened to find out that these armed groups are responsible directly or indirectly for civilian's loss of life, freedom, and possession as well as their suffering due to human rights violations and a lack of rule of law.

Therefore, it is vital that the conflict between the armed groups end to ensure there is security, peace and development for the people.

We urge all armed groups, political parties, and civil society organizations to have mutual respect for one another so that we will be able to continue to work on our common goal of establishing a federal democratic nation, which guarantees ethnic equality and self-determination

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**Ethnic women's organizations of Shan State**

Lahu Women's Organization (LWO)

Pa-O Women's Union (PWU)

Shan women's Action Network (SWAN)

Ta-ang Women's Organization (TWO)

*We are ethnic women's organizations and the members of the Women's League of Burma (WLB) who are working on peace and reconciliation, defending the rights of women and humans, and against all kinds of violence acts.*



Lahu Women's Organization, started with 9 members, was established on October 30, 1997 in a Lahu village located in Thailand. Our mission is to create more opportunities for Lahu Women's participation in all leadership role. Objectives are:

1. To preserve the Lahu cultural and traditions
2. To improve the education of Lahu children, youth and women
3. To address the health needs of Lahu people
4. To resist discrimination between women and men
5. To work for the development of Lahu women in every sphere together with other indigenous women
6. To promote the participation of women in the democracy movement in Burma.



Pa-O Women's Union (PWU) was founded in 1999 by Nang Aein, a migrant worker working in Bangkok. After she came into contact with other organizations that had been established to help ethnic women from Burma and saw a need to build capacity for Pa-O women, to promote and protect Pa-O women's rights, to promote peace building, to increase Pa-O women's opportunity to work with other networking groups and to offer them an opportunity to participate in leadership as equals with men, and to improve and modernize their standard of living. PWU has been providing internship program and Pa-O women's school for skills development and organizing peace building trainings and activism to stop violence against women in respective areas.



We observed that in Ta'ang community, women are being discriminated and have lower roles than men in every sector, such as economic, social and national platforms. We also observed that women have no chance to involve in leadership roles. Ta'ang Women's Organization was founded on Thai-Burma border, on 14 October 2000, aiming for Ta'ang women to become more confident, to be able to participate in decision making in every sector, and to be able to take leadership roles.



SWAN is a network of Shan women active in Shan State and Thailand. It was founded on 28 March 1999. Its mission is to work on gender equality and justice for women in the struggle for social and political change in Burma through community-based actions, research and advocacy. SWAN's objectives are to promote women's rights and the rights of children; to oppose exploitation of and violence against women and children; to work together for peace and freedom, to empower women for a better life; to raise awareness to preserve natural resources and the environment.