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BURMA | Army intensifies attacks in Kachin State

Even as Burma is opening up, the Burma Army is intensifying its attacks in Kachin State, where thousands have been displaced amid a humanitarian crisis.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has received reports detailing 126 clashes between Burma Army and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) troops since President Thein Sein ordered the Burma Army to stop its offensive in Kachin State on December 10, 2011. The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) estimates that it lost 140 soldiers and 160 were injured in these attacks.

An estimated 45,000 refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) are in refugee camps, while approximately 50 houses have been torched by Burma Army Light Infantry Battalions (LIB) 390 in Nam San Yang area.

On May 5, two children from Ta Li village were shot dead by Burma Army soldiers after being startled by a bomb blast while they played near Ta Li River. At a meeting with Burma Army soldiers, villagers were reportedly ordered to say that the children were killed by a KIA bomb, in order to conceal the true cause of the children's deaths. On May 2, seven houses were torched in Zi Kahtawng village in Nam San Yang.

Although the government, led by President Thein Sein, has managed to sign ceasefire agreements with various ethnic armies, the Burma Army continues to carry out serious human rights abuses in ethnic areas, including rape, torture and killings.

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki Moon has pledged technical, logistical and even financial assistance the Burmese government to help secure a peace agreement in Kachin State: "The situation in Kachin State is inconsistent with the successful conclusion of ceasefire agreements with all the other major groups. The Kachin people should no longer be denied the opportunity that a ceasefire and a political agreement can bring for peace and development. Let me acknowledge the humanitarian access that we now have in Kachin State. That access must continue."

As prerequisites for peace talks to resume, the KIO have requested an end to Burma Army military operations in Kachin State and the withdrawal of troops, an end to human rights violations and for the safety of IDPs returning to their villages to be guaranteed.

CSW's East Asia Team Leader Benedict Rogers said, "Amidst significant signs of change and hope in Burma, the situation in Kachin State is continuing to deteriorate markedly. We urge the Government of Burma to call a halt to these attacks, end the grave violations of human rights perpetrated by the Burma Army, and engage in a meaningful, inclusive political dialogue with the Kachin and other ethnic nationalities to secure a genuine, long-lasting peace through a political solution. Until the military stops committing war crimes and crimes against humanity, President Thein Sein's promises of change cannot be fully believed. President Thein Sein has introduced some reforms which are very welcome, and there is a change in atmosphere in the rest of the country, but now he needs to act to stop the military's offensives and secure real peace in Kachin State."

Notes to Editors:

1. Benedict Rogers is the author of the upcoming book, *Burma: A Nation at the Crossroads*.