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### **Statement condemning government's violence against peaceful Letpadaung protesters**

The Kachin Alliance, a network of Kachin communities and organizations in the United States, condemns the brutal crackdown of peaceful protesters at the Letpadaung copper mine project, a joint venture between China's Wangbao Mining Ltd. and military-owned Union of Myanmar Economics Holdings Ltd., near Monywa. We are outraged by the extent of unwarranted force used against unarmed civilians, peacefully standing up for their rights. We stand in solidarity with the Letpadaung protesters, and wish to express our sympathy and support for the scores injured in the crackdown, many of whom are Buddhist monks. We deplored all violence against the monks and villagers as unacceptable. Despite reform rhetoric, government's actions on peaceful Letpadaung protesters show the culture of violence still widely exists in Burma.

We empathize with the Letpadaung cause as more than any other ethnic group; we have borne the brunt of the adverse effects of the government's ill-conceived joint ventures with the Chinese state-owned companies, from the Myitsone dam to the oil and gas pipelines to China. President U Thein Sein announced in a letter addressed to parliament in Sept 2011 that construction of Myitsone dam will be suspended in the time of current government. However, Tanghphe, Mali Zup and Padang Pa villagers who have been displaced by Myitsone dam project are not allowed to return to their own villages. Chinese company workers and Asia World company workers still occupy villagers' ancestral lands and are living in temporary workers' quarters. Tanghphe high school was being demolished on Oct 9, 2011 even after dam project had been suspended.

Since 2006, the Yuzana Company, backed by Burmese military, has confiscated more than 200,000 acres of farmland from local residents in Hugawng valley to make way for gold mining, and large scale sugar cane and tapioca plantations. With little or no compensation from military-backed companies, thousands of local indigenous men, women and children have been forced into homelessness by the land seizures in Kachin State's Hugawng valley. Carried out without proper environmental studies and consultation with local communities, these projects have caused great damage to the environment and untold miseries to Kachin communities who have been deprived of their land and livelihood.

These "development" projects, which have benefitted only Chinese business enterprises, longtime cronies and their Burmese military counterparts and not the locals, have given rise to extensive human rights abuses such as large scale land grabbing, demolition of historic sites, forced relocation and forced labor.

The demand for a halt to the Letpadaung copper mine is just and timely, before irreparable damage is done to the environment and the livelihood of surrounding communities. We support the protesters in their determination to stand firm in their demands for the safety of their land and livelihood, as the impact will be felt not only in their generation but for generations to come.