



February 26, 2016

Statement of Condemnation of Burmese Government's Security Forces Shooting at Civilians

Kachin Alliance categorically condemns shooting of unarmed civilians by the Government of Burma's Border Guard Force (BGF) members. Our hearts and prayers go out to the injured citizens who risked their lives for the safety of our community.

Burma is the world's second largest producer of opium and majority of poppies are grown in government controlled areas. Successive Burmese governments have failed to tackle the drug epidemic which is prevalent in ethnic areas primarily in Kachin and Shan States. Tatmadaw has enabled the epidemic to expand by arming local militias who are involved in illicit trade in exchange for political allegiance. Presence of members of Parliament, who have had past and/or present affiliations with illegal drug trade and production, undermines the stature of offices which they hold. The government's failure to address the epidemic has forced citizens to initiate grassroots anti-drug campaign.

Community-based network, Pat Jasan Zinghri Hpung, was born out of Kachin public's aspirations to eradicate opium and illicit drugs which destroy thousands of lives each year.

In October 2015, Pat Jasan arrested suspected illicit drug dealer in Hpakant and seized two notebooks listed with ledger of payoffs which include army commanders, top police officers, anti-drug officers, and members of local authorities.

For a week from February 17 to 24, 2016, Burmese security forces, including Tatmadaw, BGF, and police, blocked the roadway to halt Pat Jasan volunteers from proceeding with eradication in the government controlled areas in Kanbaiti and Pangwa, Kachin State. A day after receiving permission to continue, members of BGF (in uniform) and opium growers fired at unarmed volunteers with assault rifles and explosives. They also torched volunteers' tents and automobiles. As of February 25, 2016, thirty three volunteers were injured and seven of them were critically wounded.

Therefore, we demand:

1. Government of Burma to fully investigate all perpetrators to bring them to justice and launch an independent investigation into opium and illicit drug trade in Kachin state with cooperation of US Drug Enforcement Administration.
2. Government of Burma to put an end to the drug epidemic by supporting public anti-drugs initiatives and collaborating with community-based anti-drug organizations.
3. UNODC and international communities to provide assistance to drug eradication and rehabilitation programs and sustainable development.
4. Burmese Army (Tatmadaw) to stop fabricating reasons to protect thriving drug business and blaming victims or inducing hostilities to construct political agenda in the new government.

For more information, please contact Kachin Alliance at (202) 500-5076.