

The European Parliamentary Caucus for Burma (EPCB) Statement on Critical Situation in Shan State - Nationwide Ceasefire Needed In Burma

May 23, 2011

The European Parliamentary Caucus on Burma is extremely concerned by the current situation in Shan State, Eastern Burma, and in other ethnic states, where conflict is increasing.

Reports from the Shan Human Rights Foundation and Shan Women's Action Network have exposed an increase in serious human rights abuses since the dictatorship ruling Burma broke a ceasefire agreement with the Shan State Army, North, and attacked their headquarters. The abuses committed by the Burmese Army include gang-rape, the deliberate targeting of civilians with mortar bombs, arbitrary imprisonment, looting and torture.

This is the third ceasefire agreement broken by the dictatorship in the past two years. The EPCB is extremely concerned that the dictatorship will break ceasefire agreements with other armed ethnic groups, escalating conflict in the country.

The EPCB strongly condemns the dictatorship in Burma for breaking ceasefire agreements with armed ethnic groups in Burma, and calls on the dictatorship to declare an immediate nationwide ceasefire.

The EPCB also condemns the silence of the European Union, United Nations, and governments about the human rights abuses being committed, and failure to act to prevent this predicted crisis.

The EPCB calls on Baroness Ashton, on behalf of the European Union, to publicly condemn these attacks and call for a nationwide ceasefire.

The EPCB is very surprised that the UN Envoy to Burma has recently visited Burma without making any public reference to this current crisis, or the looming threat of conflict spreading. We call on the United Nations to end its silence, and actively work to secure a nationwide ceasefire in Burma.

The attacks against civilians by the Burmese Army have caused widespread displacement, both internally, and into neighbouring countries. We call on the European Union to reverse cuts to funding food and shelter for refugees fleeing conflict, and for the European Commission and European governments to provide urgently needed cross-border aid, to reach those who cannot be reached by aid delivered in-country, due to restrictions in place by the dictatorship.

The international community has a responsibility for work for peace and a transition to democracy in Burma. The current approach of waiting to see if the new dictator of Burma, Thein Sein, will introduce change, while at the same time human rights abuses increase and Burma risks sliding into widespread civil war, is an abdication of that responsibility, and cannot be allowed to continue.

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