



KACHIN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION THAILAND

P.O.BOX 415, CHIANG MAI 50000, THAILAND

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Press release by the Kachin Women's Association Thailand

Gang-rape in church highlights Burma Army impunity for sexual violence in Kachin conflict

The gang-rape and prolonged torture of a woman in a church near the Kachin-China border town of Pang Wa in early May show the ongoing impunity for sexual violence enjoyed by the Burma Army.

On May 1, 2012, a patrol of Burmese troops from two battalions (Light Infantry Battalion 347 and Infantry Battalion 118) arrived at Luk Pi village, Chipwi township, northwest of Pang Wa, and found "Ngwa Mi" (not her real name) aged 48, sheltering alone in a church, after most of the other villagers had fled. About ten troops beat her with rifle butts, stabbed her with knives, stripped her naked and gang-raped her over a period of three days in the church.

This abuse was witnessed by another villager, Yu Ta Gwi, aged 59, who was captured while caring for his paralyzed wife. He was tied up in the church compound and kicked and stabbed by the Burmese troops. After the troops had left, on May 4th, he and Ngwa Mi were found semi-conscious by some Kachin villagers and taken to Pang Wa hospital.

Ngwa Mi, a grandmother with 12 children, has been reunited with her family, but has now become mentally deranged.

KWAT is gravely concerned at this latest incident of sexual violence, committed brazenly in the sanctuary of a church. KWAT places the blame squarely on the government in Naypyidaw, where the Supreme Court recently dismissed charges against the Burmese military for the abduction and disappearance of a Kachin woman Sumlut Roi Ja in October last year.

"The message from the Naypyidaw Supreme Court is clear: the Burmese military can rape and kill ethnic women with impunity," said KWAT coordinator Moon Nay Li.

KWAT demands that the regime immediately stops using rape as a weapon of war, ends the offensive against Kachin.

This new incident of sexual violence took place close to the site of the planned Chipwi hydropower dam on the May Kha River, one of a series of seven planned mega-dams on the Irrawaddy and its upper tributaries. Despite the spreading conflict in northern Burma, Chinese workers, with Burmese army security, have been continuously preparing for construction of these dams.

The spread of conflict to the Pang Wa area this month has displaced thousands more villagers, heightening the humanitarian crisis facing local communities seeking to feed and shelter over 70,000 displaced since the Kachin ceasefire was broken in June 2011.

Media contacts: Shirley Seng + 66 86- 9238- 854

Moon Nay Li + 66 85- 6251- 912

Email: kwat.coordinator@gmail.com/ kwat@loxinfo.co.th