



Chin Human Rights Organization

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CHRO: Concerns of Forced Displacement of Chin Civilians as a Result of Arakan Army Activities

Immediate Release

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The Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO) is deeply concerned by the displacement of hundreds of Chin civilians, mostly women and children from the Mara, Chin community in Paletwa Township, southern Chin State. This is as a result of ongoing Arakan Army (AA) activities in the region. CHRO has independently verified the information, which was first reported by the *New Indian Express* on Monday, 22nd May 2017. While initial news of short-term humanitarian support by local authorities in India was to be welcomed, today's reports of Chin refugees returning under armed guard are deeply concerning.

CHRO sources have confirmed that at least 500 people from four villages in Northern Paletwa fled their homes, having feared the prospect of conflict between AA and Tatmadaw forces in the area. On the 18th May, 2017 approximately 261 people from Ralie village, fled over the Indian border to Lungpuk village, and approximately 64 villagers fled to Khaikhy village, both located in Mizoram. A further 243 people are internally displaced, having fled Lel Thit, Tha Lowa and Shwe Laik Wa villages.

"We are gravely concerned by this latest incident where innocent Chin civilians have suffered due to Arakan Army activities in Chin State. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated incident and CHRO has documented a trend of abuse against Chin civilians that have resulted in severe human rights violations, including forced displacement, hostage-taking, torture and death as a result of AA activities." Said Mai Thin Yumon, Country Program Coordinator, Chin Human Rights Organization.

It is reported that an AA force numbering at least 60 soldiers gathered in Yon Let Wa village and the surrounding area on 17th May, 2017. They demanded 50 sacks of rice from the villagers in Yon Let Wa. As the village did not have the stocks to provide this, they were told by AA soldiers to go and buy more from the nearby village of Shin Let Wa. Due to the presence of Tatmadaw in this area the villagers were concerned of the risk posed to them if perceived to be supporting AA activities. Rather than risk arrest, the villagers decided to flee.

"All parties to an armed conflict have legal obligations to protect civilians. Non-state armed groups such as the AA must abide by the rules of customary international humanitarian law (IHL). This means avoiding conditions that might lead to the displacement of civilians. Arbitrary demands, have clearly led to the creation of these conditions." Continued Mai Thin Yu Mon.

To the AA: Cease all activities which continue to violate international human rights and humanitarian law, and the continued disregard for the safety of civilians in Chin State.

To the Indian Government: Observe customary international legal obligations under the principle of *non-refoulement* and ensure the security and well-being of the Chin refugees.

To the Myanmar Authorities: Take measures to facilitate a secure environment for voluntary and safe return of Chin refugees and IDP's in this area of Paletwa.

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