

URGENT ACTION

THOUSANDS AT RISK OF FORCED EVICTION

Thousands of people are at risk of being forcibly evicted from their homes and farms to make way for the Letpadaung copper mine in central Myanmar.

On 24 March 2015 the President's office announced that the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment for the Letpadaung mine project in Sagaing region, central Myanmar, had been approved. There is therefore a high risk that the mining company Myanmar Wanbao will resume operations to take over land for the project and forcibly evict 196 families who have refused to move and thousands of villagers whose land has not yet been taken over by the company. Myanmar Wanbao is a subsidiary of Chinese company Wanbao Mining.

The Letpadaung project involves the acquisition of 6,785 acres of land, largely farm lands, from 30 villages. It includes the complete relocation of the villages of Zeedaw, Saedee, Kandaw and Wet Hme. Between 2011 and 2014, the Myanmar authorities and Myanmar Wanbao forcibly evicted people without genuine consultation, due process, legal remedies, adequate resettlement and compensation. Myanmar Wanbao has taken over approximately half of the land required for the project from the 30 affected villages and 245 families from the four villages have been moved to resettlement sites. 196 families have refused to move and many people from the other affected villages are refusing to give up their farm lands. These people are now at risk of forced eviction.

On 22 December 2014, Myanmar Wanbao bulldozed crops and began fencing off more farm lands near the Saedee village after announcing that it would extend its working area. It suspended the fencing two days later, after there were widespread protests about the police's use of firearms and live ammunition during a clash with community members who tried to stop the bulldozers. The police killed Daw Khin Win, a woman farmer, and injured a few other people. Any attempts to fence more land without resolving outstanding community concerns may also result in further clashes between the police and community members.

Please write immediately in English, Burmese, Chinese or your own language:

- Calling on the mining company Myanmar Wanbao to halt any plans to take over the remaining land for the Letpadaung mine and carry out a genuine consultation with all affected persons on the evictions, resettlement conditions and compensation;
- Urging the company to ensure that conditions in resettlement villages comply with international standards on adequacy of housing and that people who have been forcibly evicted from their homes and farm lands receive adequate reparation;
- Urging the company to comply with its commitment that it will only use the police to protect its operations when the police guarantee that they will comply with international standards and guidelines on use of force.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 16 JUNE 2015 TO:

Chairman and Managing Director
Myanmar Wanbao Mining Copper Ltd
 Mr Geng Yi
 70 (1) Bo Chein Street Pyay Road,
 Hlaing Township, Yangon
 Republic of the Union of Myanmar
 Email: gengyi@wbmining.com
Salutation: Dear Mr Geng Yi

President of Wanbao Mining Ltd
 Mr Chen Defang
 17-19F, West Wing, No.1 Cai Yuan St.
 Xi Cheng District, Beijing
 Peoples Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Mr Chen Defang

And copies to:
Minister of Mines, Dr Myint Aung
 Office no. 19, Nay Pyi Taw
 Republic of Union of Myanmar
 Email: deptmine@gmail.com
 Fax: +95 67 409 373

President Thein Sein
 President's Office, Nay Pyi Taw
 Republic of the Union of Myanmar
 Fax: +95 1 6 52 624

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Large deposits of copper in the Monywa district in central Myanmar have been developed as two linked mining operations referred to as the Monywa project – the Sabetaung and Kyisintaung (S&K) mine which has been operational since the 1980s and the Letpadaung mine, which is currently being built. Between 2010 and 2011 the Monywa project was taken over by the military-owned conglomerate, the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (UMEHL), and Wanbao Mining Ltd, a Chinese mining company, which is a subsidiary of China North Industries Corporation (NORINCO).

The land acquisition process for the Letpadaung mine has blatantly breached international standards on the rights to adequate housing and food. Myanmar authorities deliberately misled people about the evictions for the Letpadaung mine. Villagers told Amnesty International, Justice Trust and the Myanmar Lawyers Network, that in December 2010, the local authorities informed them that machines for the mine would be moved through their farms and they would be given compensation for damage to crops. No mention was made of land acquisition or evictions. The villagers only realized what was happening when, in 2011, Myanmar Wanbao began construction on part of their farm lands. The authorities also used provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure to restrict people's access to their farms and lands after they were taken over.

According to a census conducted by UMEHL and the regional authorities, 16,694 people (3,138 families) are adversely affected by land acquisition for the project. The government appointed Letpadaung Investigation Commission that looked into some of the social and environmental impacts of the Letpadaung mine, confirmed in a 2013 report that officials had not given the people transparent explanations when confiscating the land. It also found that the alternate houses provided by Myanmar Wanbao in the resettlement sites were of inferior quality and did not enable people to keep cattle.

In 2013 and 2014, consultations on the Letpadaung project were carried out with the villagers by teams of people appointed by Myanmar Wanbao and by an external consulting company. The consultations have been deeply flawed and villagers who have refused to relocate were expressly excluded from the consultation process on the government's instructions. Following the Letpadaung Investigation Commission's report and community protests over the situation, Myanmar Wanbao offered people further compensation. However, the company has not adequately addressed the loss of livelihoods, which is a long-term problem as almost all of the affected people were dependent on farming for their livelihoods and as a source of food.

Community protests over the Letpadaung mine have, on multiple occasions, been met with excessive force by the Myanmar authorities. On 29 November 2012 police brutally attacked monks and villagers peacefully protesting at the mine site with incendiary white phosphorus munitions. The attack was launched from within Myanmar Wanbao's compound.

Since the Letpadaung project was set up, the Myanmar government has enacted new laws related to land acquisition. However, the reforms do not go far enough and there remains a lack of an adequate legal framework to protect against human rights abuses linked to land acquisition for commercial uses.

For further details, see Amnesty International, *Open for business? Corporate crime and abuses at Myanmar copper mine: briefing* (10 February 2015, ASA 16/0004/2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/0004/2015/my/>)

Name: Daw Khin Win (f), families at risk of forced eviction (both)
Gender m/f: both

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