

## **Statement**

### **New Burma Army offensive in Karen State linked to Salween dam plans**

Salween Watch 13 October 2014

Salween Watch is gravely concerned at the recent escalation of fighting and displacement in Karen state, Burma/Myanmar, which is linked to plans by the Burma Army to clear the way for the planned Hut Gyi Dam on the Salween.

During the past few days, there has been fighting between the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) and Burma Army, opposite Tasong Yang District, Tak Province, near the location of the Hut Gyi Dam. On October 11, 260 Karen villagers fled to the Thai border, but were pushed back to the Burmese side of the border by Thai authorities.

DKBA and Karen National Union (KNU) sources say that the Burma Army has warned the DKBA that they will be "wiped out" from the Hut Gyi dam area, and nine trucks of Burmese troops have been sent into the area since October 8. The DKBA is known to be opposed to the Hut Gyi Dam.

Hut Gyi Dam is one of five hydropower projects proposed on the Salween River in Burma, all of which are situated in ethnic areas which have been suffering from decades of civil war. There has been strong opposition to the projects by local communities, who are urging that the projects be halted immediately, and only be reconsidered when there is genuine peace and democracy in Burma.

Salween Watch condemns this recent escalation of conflict by the Burma Army, which is further evidence that building dams in war zones only exacerbates conflict and militarization. Especially during this time of nationwide ceasefire negotiations in Burma, we demand that the Burmese government immediately ends this military offensive and pulls back its troops from the area.

We also urge the Thai government to order the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) to withdraw its involvement in the Hut Gyi Dam, which is not only impacting communities inside Burma, but is also having transboundary impacts.

*Salween Watch is a coalition of civil society groups which has been monitoring planned dams on the Salween River for over a decade*

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