

Pa-Oh youth launch campaign to oppose damaging impacts of Burma's largest iron mine

October 27, Pa-Oh Youth

Pa-Oh youth activists are today launching a campaign to support community efforts to oppose the damaging impacts of Pinpet iron mine near Taunggyi in Shan State, the largest in Burma.

The Pa-Oh Youth Organisation (PYO) has produced a video and leaflets showing the destruction already caused by the mining project, due to start next year, including loss of farmlands, pollution of waterways, and abuses committed by the Burmese regime's troops providing security for the project. Hundreds of copies of the video have already been distributed in the affected areas.

Construction of the massive iron factory, jointly funded by Russian state-owned Tyazhpromexport company, is almost complete. 100 villagers are now being ordered out of the project area, among 7,000 people slated for relocation once Pinpet mountain starts being leveled for open pit mining. A further 35,000 villagers will be impacted by pollution of the Thabet Stream, which has been diverted to clean and process the iron ore.

Affected communities have appealed to local authorities to stop the land confiscation and forced relocation, but so far to no avail.

"There is a news black-out about the Pinpet project in Burma. We want to raise awareness about the damage being caused and support community efforts to oppose the project," said PYO spokesperson Khun Chan Khe.

The former ceasefire group, the Pa-Oh National Organization, is competing in the November 7, 2010 election in Ho Pong constituency, which is impacted by the Pinpet project. They have not yet raised any concerns publicly against the project.

"The Pinpet project is destroying the future of our people. If they are standing for election, the PNO should protect local people's rights and speak out to oppose the project," said Khun Chan Khe.

To see the video and an update on the project, see <http://pyo-org.blogspot.com/>