

# Blood Amber

**Military resource grab clears out indigenous peoples in Kachin State's Hugawng Valley**



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## Summary

In 2018, Burmese government troops stepped up their war in Kachin State, further driving out indigenous populations and expanding control over the area's rich natural resources and strategic trading routes. The fiercest offensive was fought in northwest Kachin State's Hugawng Valley, to secure the historic Ledo Road linking India and China, which is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, and to seize hugely lucrative amber mines.

Kachin State amber is a global treasure: it is the only type in the world formed during the age of the dinosaurs. "Blood amber" is the Chinese name of the extremely rare, deep red variety of the gem found only in the Hugawng Valley – a name which resonates grimly with local residents who have been driven out by the recent offensive.

The amber mining boom began in 2010, due to demand from the Chinese market, causing tens of thousands of migrant miners from across Burma to flock to the region. In 2015, discovery of a 99-million-year-old feathered dinosaur tail in Hugawng Valley amber further fuelled the trade.

The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) controlled the remote amber

mining area, but the Burma Army collected taxes on all amber transport routes as the precious resource was exported across Kachin State into China, where the annual value of the trade is estimated at 1 billion USD a year.

In June 2017, the Burma Army moved to take over the amber trade at the source. They used aircraft to drop thousands of leaflets over the mining area, ordering all local residents to evacuate within ten days – or be branded as KIA insurgents. This included not only the mine workers but also nearly 5,000 indigenous villagers who had lived and farmed there for generations.

The offensive lasted nearly one year, during which civilians suffered not only the seizure of their lands and property, but also military harassment and violence. On January 26, 2018, three civilians were killed by an aerial attack, including the young mother of a 3 year-old child.

In January 2018, nearly 3,000 civilians were trapped in the conflict area by the Burma Army, who refused to allow them to pass to safety, holding them for eleven days without proper food or healthcare and blocking delivery of humanitarian aid. To this day, the thousands

of indigenous inhabitants of the amber mining area are living in makeshift shelters in urban church compounds, unrecognized as IDPs and unable to return home.

Despite using the premise of “protecting the environment” to justify the offensive, unregulated amber mining resumed in the region just one year after the offensive began, exposing the Burma military’s real motives in seizing the mines.

The offensive follows a repeated pattern of military expansion and violence against ethnic peoples in Kachin State in order to consolidate extractive businesses to profit the military and central government at the expense of local indigenous populations.

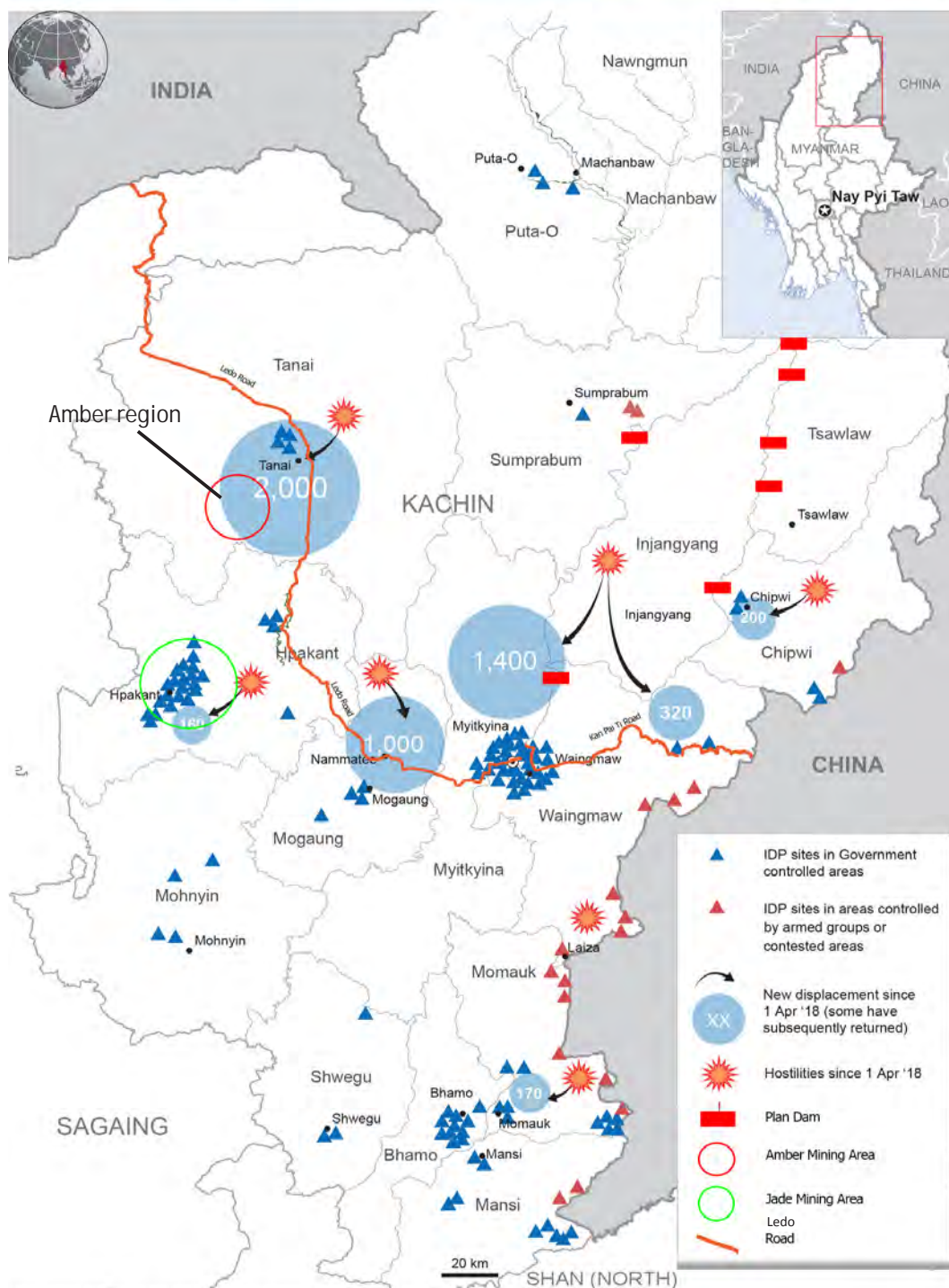
Past documentation by KDNG has already shown that, far from protecting the environment, the government and military has been responsible for large-scale environmental destruction in the Hugawng Valley over the last 20 years. It has authorized destructive gold mining throughout the valley, and given permission for Yuzana Company to destroy hundreds of acres of forest and farmlands to carry out monocrop agriculture for the Chinese market. Similarly in nearby Hpakant, jade mining has expanded exponentially

since government security forces seized control of the mines, generating huge profits for government and military elites, while driving local people off their lands and destroying their livelihoods.

The central government must recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to live on their land and manage their own resources, and must immediately take steps to allow people displaced from the amber region to return home.

Constitutional change is critical to resolve conflict in Burma. Local people in Kachin State must own, manage, and receive revenues from the natural resources of the land where they live and work.

International pressure is urgently needed to help protect civilians in conflict zones in Kachin State and elsewhere in Burma. Foreign economic investment and peace process funding should be frozen until the Burma military stops its offensives against Kachin and other ethnic peoples. In the meantime, international humanitarian aid should be sent to help communities displaced from their homes and livelihoods by central government aggression.



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Creation date: 29 Apr 2018 Sources: GAD, JST, CCCM, KBC, IRRC. Feedback: [ochamyanmar@un.org](mailto:ochamyanmar@un.org) [www.unocha.org](http://www.unocha.org) [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

Mining areas, Ledo Road, and proposed dams added by KDNG


# Introduction

In 2018, the Burma Army stepped up offensives across Kachin State to expand central government control over the area's rich natural resources and strategic trading routes. An offensive in Injangyang township cleared out thousands of Kachin villagers from north of the planned Myitsone dam project. An offensive in Hpakant further cleared out villagers from the hills around the jade mines.

But the fiercest offensive took place in the Hugawng Valley. It was aimed to secure control of the historic Ledo Road—which links India and China and is part of China's Belt and Road Initiative—and to seize the area's lucrative amber mines. Hugawng Valley amber shot to international fame in 2015 when a Chinese paleontologist discovered a feathered dinosaur tail embedded in hunk of amber in Myitkyina's market.

This report details the history of the amber mining trade in Hugawng Valley, how the offensive was carried out, and the dispossession of the area's indigenous inhabitants. It is based on in-depth interviews with twenty-one people from the area.

This report is written to help better understand the background history of Hugawng Valley's people, land, and amber mines. It analyzes the source of problems around natural resources and proposes solutions to address them. The report is a call to allow the native Hugawng people to get involved and make decisions in how resources are distributed and used, and to begin a new course of development that is better able to be sustained for the next generation.



Tsa Ji  
General Secretary, KDNG

## Background

Kachin State is a land of long mountain ranges enclosing lush flat valleys. Rivers loop through like unraveled yarn, and the Irrawaddy flows south from the Himalayas on its way to Yangon and the Andaman Sea. Wedged between India and China, Kachin State is home to Kachin, Naga, and other ethnic peoples who have lived here for centuries. The state is rich in mineral resources, including gold, the highest quality jade in the world, and amber deposits dating from the age of the dinosaurs.

The Hugawng Valley lies mainly in the township of Danai, northwest of Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State. Danai is divided into 17 village tracts, with a total of 60 villages. The official population of the township was 32,981 in 2005, but by 2017 up to 100,000 migrants from other parts of Burma had moved into the valley seeking work in gold and amber mines.

Traditionally, Kachin tribal chiefs administered the valley, and their rule was recognized even during British colonization. One elder explains:

Before World War II, Hugawng valley was ruled by twelve regional Chiefs. They met at traditional festivals to discuss how to administer the region.

When the British arrived, taxing began. One kyat was collected from each household; 50 pyas went to the British government and another 50 pyas to the local chief (Mung Du). The Chief in turn gave 25 pyas out of his share to the village head. Thus they administered the land and population. (Interview No. 6)

The fertile alluvial soils on the banks of the Danai River, the main headwater of the Chindwin, provide the valley with vast areas of arable land. Local people grow wet paddy in lowland areas, practice rotational agriculture in upland areas, and raise domestic animals. They also subsist by hunting, fishing, and collecting fruits and forest products.

Burmese amber, or burmite, is recorded in Chinese texts as early as the first century AD. Burmite is mined from the Hugawng Valley, in Kachin State, and is more than twice the age of amber from any other region in the world. It is known for being very clear and harder than other kinds of amber. Amber is fossilized tree resin, and according to traditional Chinese medicine, it is one of five gemstones with healing powers. Pieces of amber sometimes hold insects, birds, and reptiles preserved from when they were trapped in the resin millions of years ago.





*Insects trapped in a piece of burmite at the Myitkyina amber market*

Blood amber (*xuepo* or 血珀 in Mandarin) is the Chinese name of a rare, deep red variety of amber found only in Kachin State. It is particularly desirable in the Chinese market.

Kachin State amber is the only amber in the world formed during the age of the dinosaurs. It is around 100 million years old, while amber from other regions of the world ranges in age from 3 to 40 million years old. Scientists have discovered extinct species of birds, reptiles, insects, and even parts of dinosaurs preserved in Hugawng Valley amber. The most famous of these was the discovery, in 2015, of a feathered dinosaur tail that is 99 million years old.



*A piece of blood amber in the Myitkyina market*



*Kachin peoples celebrate traditional manau festival in Danai*

## The amber region: A home to indigenous inhabitants

There are five main villages in the amber region of the Hugawng Valley: Nambyu-Namkham, Nam Gawn, Htang Bra, N-Ga Ga, and Woi Law. Together they have a combined population of approximately 4,725 people. All of these existed and were occupied with Kachin residents since before the time of the British colonial rule.

As described earlier, the Hugawng valley was ruled by twelve Kachin Chiefs before the British arrived. Nambyu, Namhkam, and N-Ga Ga villages were ruled by Walawbum Duwa, Anai Duwa, and Lahpai Duwa (Duwa refers to a Kachin

chief). The Duwas continued to rule the area when the British arrived and under the parliamentary system. During the Burmese socialism era, the villages continued to be administered with a village council system.

In 1966, after attacks from a military offensive, the Union Government combined the villagers from Hkasan, Kawngja, Ka-angringya, Jaawngyang, Samsa, Palen, Dingh-kun, Namhkampa, Nawngwam, and Zikawng into a combined settlement named Nambyu-Namhkam. As such, Nambyu-Namhkam is the biggest village of the five in the area today.

The Union Government recognized the villages and supported the issuing of National ID cards; villagers worked for the government’s military and farmers paid rice tax to the government. Mr. Lashi Naw was appointed as the village head in Nambyu-Namhkam village during the time of the State Law and Order Restoration Council after 1988.

Village Name	Households	Population
N-Ga Ga	50	200
Woi Law	24	105
Htang Bra	50	220
Nam Gawn	200	1,200
Nambyu-Namhkam	700	3,000

After the ceasefire agreement between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Burmese government in 1994, Nambyu-Namhkam was developed to have a middle school, village clinic, and other basic infrastructure. When the 2008 Constitution was adopted, the villages had to give support to the Union’s administrative system.

Nambyu-Namhkam and N-Ga Ga villages were designated part of Constituency 2 in the 2010 election. All of this is significant, because it proves that these villages did not come into existence because of migrant miners, but through the settlement of generations of Kachin villagers who living there with their own governance systems.



photo by Hkam Lat

*Sunset in Nambyu-Namhkam:* Through the generations residents have provided well for themselves with farming here, growing upland and lowland rice, tending to orange orchards, and raising pigs, chickens, cows, and buffalo.

## Amber mining in Hugawng

According to local residents, the Hugawng Valley has been known as “amber territory” since the time of the Burmese kings. The main amber deposits are found on the sides of a hill called Noiye Bum (or “Banyan Mountain” in Kachin), twenty kilometers southwest of Danai town.

According to a local elder:

Amber has been mined since the time of British rule. In those days, the streams from the mountain were dammed and when the water was released it flushed the amber out of the ground. In the summer, 4-foot square holes were dug to mine amber, but not very deep.

At first people found amber stones washed out by mountain streams, and women wore pointed cylindrical pieces of amber as earrings. After the British arrived, some Chinese merchants from Hong Kong came and sold household utensils to the local people. They found amber in this area and started mining amber together with Chinese from Canton. At that time, my father was an officer of the land survey department. He had six British policemen working with him.

Kachin Chief Anai Tang from the amber region collected taxes from amber mining. Kachin Chiefs were permitted to do amber business free from tax. Chinese from Hong Kong and Canton traded commodities for amber. The amber trade faded away after WWII, and at the beginning of the KIA period, amber was not in fashion. (Interview No. 6)

Amber was mined in the Hugawng Valley under the British colonial government, starting in the 1830s.<sup>1</sup> After Burma’s independence from Britain in 1948, there was no significant amber mining in the Hugawng Valley. In the late 1990s, the descendant of a local Duwa tried to sell some amber in Tengchong (in China), but there was no interest. This began to change in the 2000s, and in 2007, locals started digging chest-deep holes to mine for amber. By 2009, the Chinese market for amber was heating up and people flocked to Danai to try their luck at amber mining. At that time, no tax was paid and people mined freely. This changed in 2010 when demand for amber increased from the Chinese market.<sup>2</sup>





photo by Huan Lai/NRGI

*Amber from the Hugawng Valley on display in Yangon's Bogyoke market*



photo by Huan Lai/NRGI

*Hugawng's amber region: By 2017, up to 100,000 workers from Kachin State and other parts of Burma were working in roughly one hundred mines. Most mine operators were small-scale businesspeople.*





Miners used two main techniques. In the first, 4-foot square shafts are dug into the ground to a depth of about 30 to 40 feet. These then lead off horizontally along seams of amber. The second technique uses hoses to flush out amber from stream banks with water.

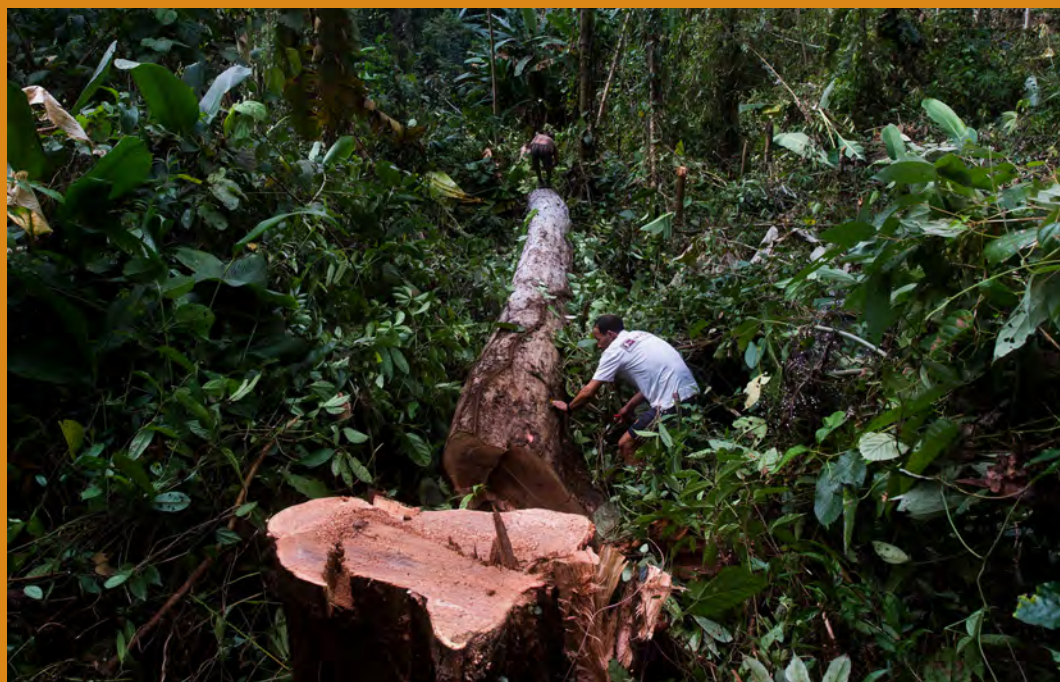


photo by Hkam Lat/NRGI

Bamboo and wooden poles are cut from surrounding forests to form scaffolding along the web of mining shafts below ground. Pulleys and buckets are used to haul the soil and rock out of the shafts.





photo by Hkam Lai/NRGI



photo by Hkam Lai/NRGI

Working underground is extremely dangerous, as the tunnels can collapse at the slightest tremor. Miners breathe through plastic pipes linked up to the air aboveground, but these sometimes break or become dislodged. In the last week of November 2017, three amber miners died from lack of oxygen.

## Export to China

Raw amber was transported out by jungle road, taken by motorized boats to Danai town, and then sent by road to Myitkyina. Most of the amber was then transported via the Kampeiti border crossing directly to Tengchong in southwest China, and then on to other towns in Yunnan province and across China. Only a small amount of amber was sent to other parts of Burma.

At every stage of this transport, the Burma military and various government departments collected taxes on the amber trade. There is no official accounting of these earnings or how they have been spent.

Although a few cutting and polishing workshops sprang up in Danai, Myitkyina, and Waingmaw, most of the processing took place in China after the amber was exported wholesale. The Tengchong Cultural Industry Office estimated that the turnover of the amber trade in Tengchong China amounted to approximately 1 billion USD in 2015 alone.<sup>3</sup> Although Kachin State natural resources are destroyed, extracted, and exported, only a few people in the state have benefited from only a small fraction of the value of those resources. The economic benefits created by the development of value-added industries are also almost entirely exported to China.



*A few workers try to gain from amber trade by polishing the gems in Waingmaw*

## Military expansion and amber income

There was no permanent Burma Army presence in Danai before 1963, the year that the newly established military regime sent Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) 96 to the Hugawng Valley (LIB 96 was replaced by LIB 86 in 1970).

In 1992, two more battalions (IB 238 and LIB 318), a Regional Operations Command, and an artillery unit were established in the town of Danai, on land confiscated from local residents. In 1994, despite signing a ceasefire with the KIA, the Burma Army established two new bases along the Ledo Road south of Danai town: IB 297 at Shatu Zup, and IB 298 at Dumbang.

After the Burma Army broke the 17-year ceasefire with the KIA in June 2011, it launched offensives across Kachin and northern Shan State, leading to the large-scale displacement of over 100,000 people who remain in internal refugee (IDP) camps to this today.

Amber mining boomed in Hugawng Valley from 2010 to June 2017. The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) began collecting tax on the mines in 2010, using revenues to manage areas under its administration. At the same time, the Myanmar military started taxing

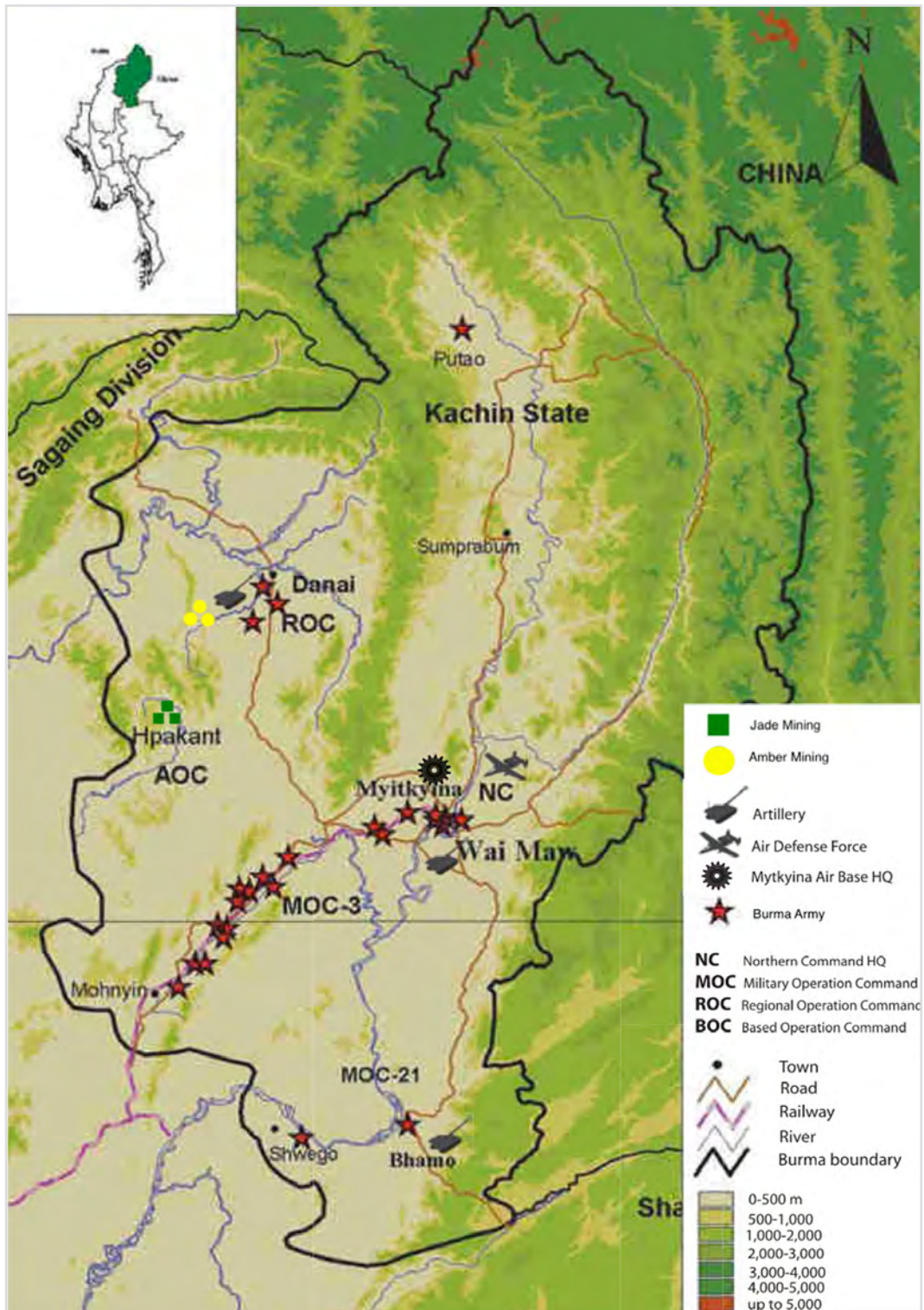
the transportation of amber coming out of Hugawng Valley, as well as food, fuel, and machinery going into the mining area. KDNG spoke to several traders and transporters for this report who wish to remain anonymous. They estimate that the earnings from this taxation amounted to nearly 30 million dollars per year by 2017.

According to a pastor from Danai:

Although the Burma Army banned rice and cooking oil in the amber region, there are black markets through the cooperation of the army and marketeers which sell these commodities. Fuel oil is being transported by engine boats at nights. The black-marketeers pay the army Ks. 30,000 to Ks. 50,000 per one drum tank of fuel oil. At Kawng Ra, twenty trucks with 50 drum tanks in each truck came every night. Even a private soldier could buy a new motorbike within one week. In 2017, rice, fuel oil and pigs that were confiscated at Lamung village checkpoint were later sold at Minn Htet Thar oil shop. (Interview No. 2)



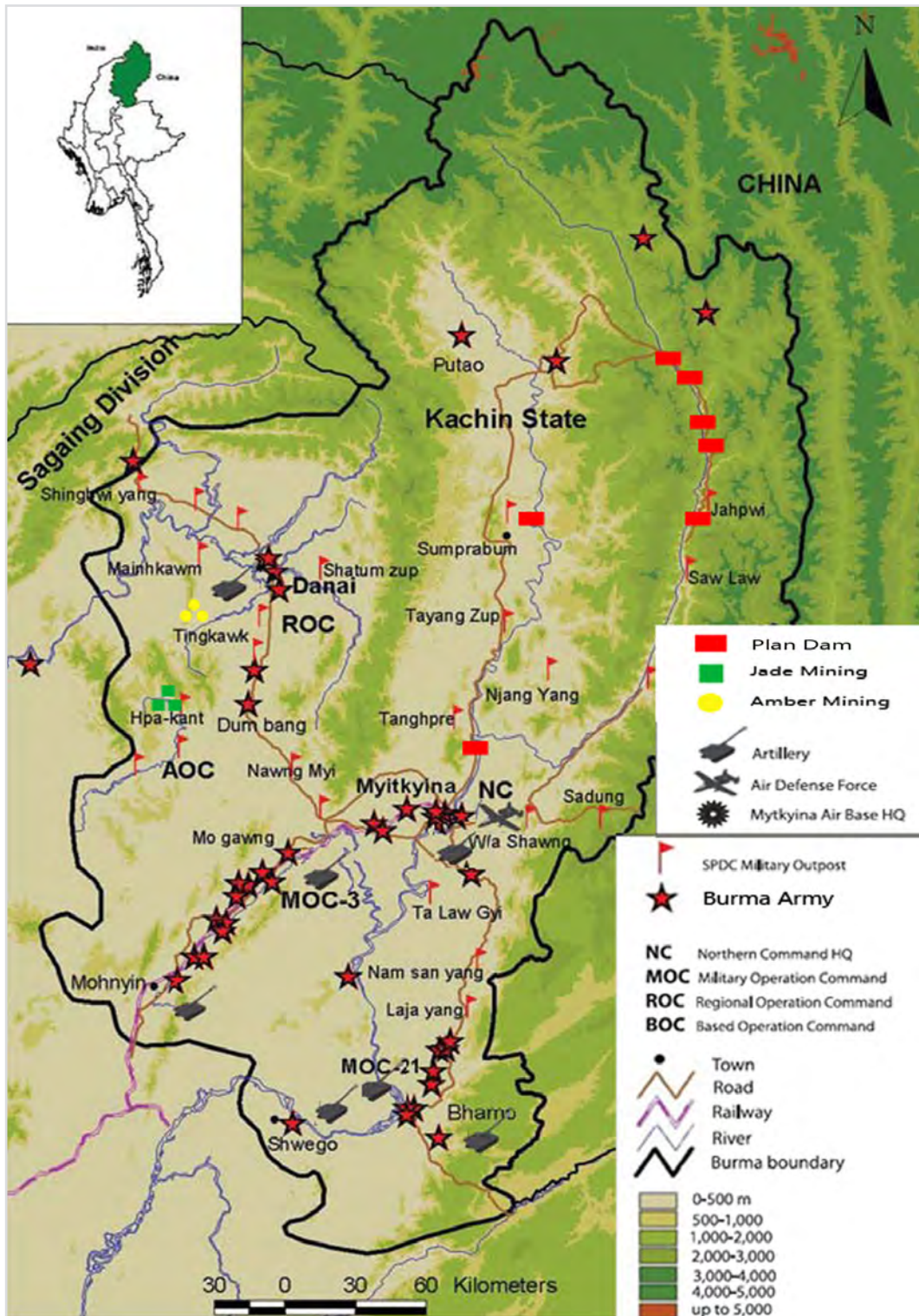
# Burma Army Battalions in Kachin State 1994 26 Battalions





# Burma Army Battalions in Kachin State 2006

## 41 Battalions



Amber revenues became more important for the KIA during 2014-2016, as the Burma Army gradually took over the jade mines in Hpakant (see map).

In May 2016, the Burma Army drove the KIA from its bases in the jade mining areas of neighboring Hpakant township, and launched major attacks in Danai.

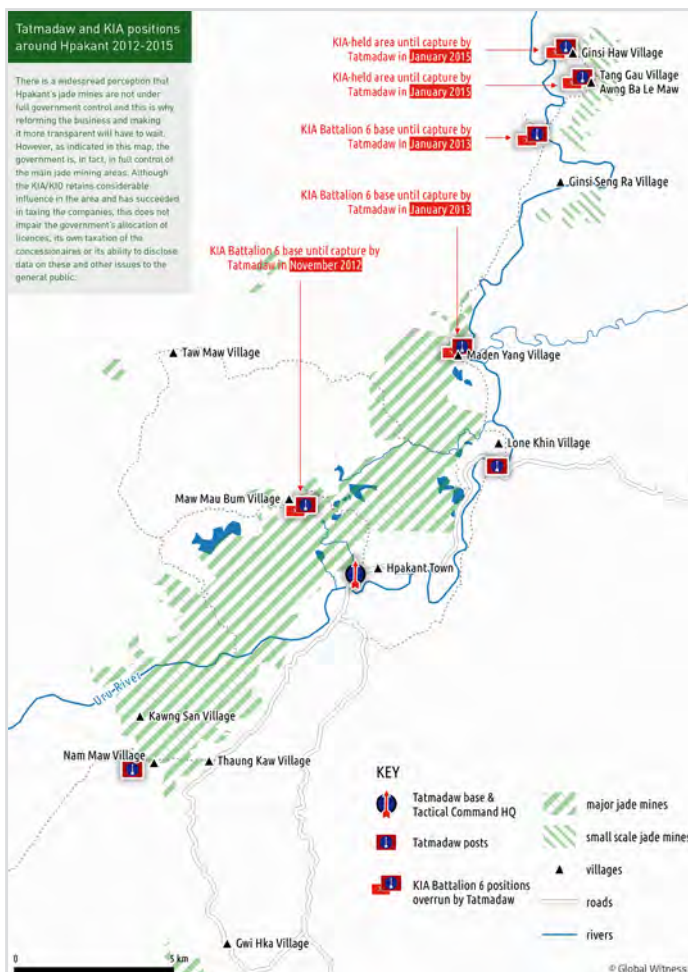
In July 2016, the Burma Army launched an attack (by IB 33, 383,

384) against KIA bases in the gold mining area south of Danai, west of the Ledo Road. The fighting displaced over 1,000 people: about half were migrant mining workers and half were from the four local villages of Lawt Ja, Awng Len, Hka Da Zup, and Hkaw Seng.

Following this, there was a steady build-up of troops in Danai. By June 2017, the Burma Army had at its disposal infantry battalions 86, 238, 318, 297, 298, 37, 66,

88, 101, troops from the Khanti regional base in Sagaing, and the Danai Regional Operation Command (DaKaSa), along with heavy artillery.

The stage was set for a full-scale offensive to drive the KIA out of the amber mining area, and indigenous Kachin residents with them. This would not only expand the territory under the Burma Army's control, but also deprive the KIA of tax revenues and allow the Burma military and government to control and profit from amber mining.



## Hugawng valley offensive, June 2017 to present

### ***A warning from the sky***

On June 5, 2017, a military helicopter flew over the amber mine area, dropping leaflets by the thousands. They said:

Local peoples and migrant workers who are living in these areas have until 15 June 2017 to leave. Anyone who does not leave by this date will be classified as cooperating with KIA (Kachin) insurgents.

With these words, indigenous villagers and migrant workers had just ten days to pack up anything they could and flee in advance of the “clearance operation.” No evacuation plan was announced and no alternative housing prepared. People head-

ed for bigger towns hoping to find safety there. Villagers from Nambyu-Namhkam, N-Ga Ga, Nam Gawn, Htang Bra, and Woi Law left behind their homes, their school and churches, their fields, their animals, and their livelihoods.

### ***Attacks begin***

On June 15, 2017, the offensive began. Most villagers and migrant workers had already fled and many took shelter in churches in Danai and Myitkyina. Over the next six months the Burma Army pushed the KIA’s 14th battalion north out of the amber mining area. Tens of thousands of migrant workers and several thousand local Kachin villagers fled the area to escape the fighting.

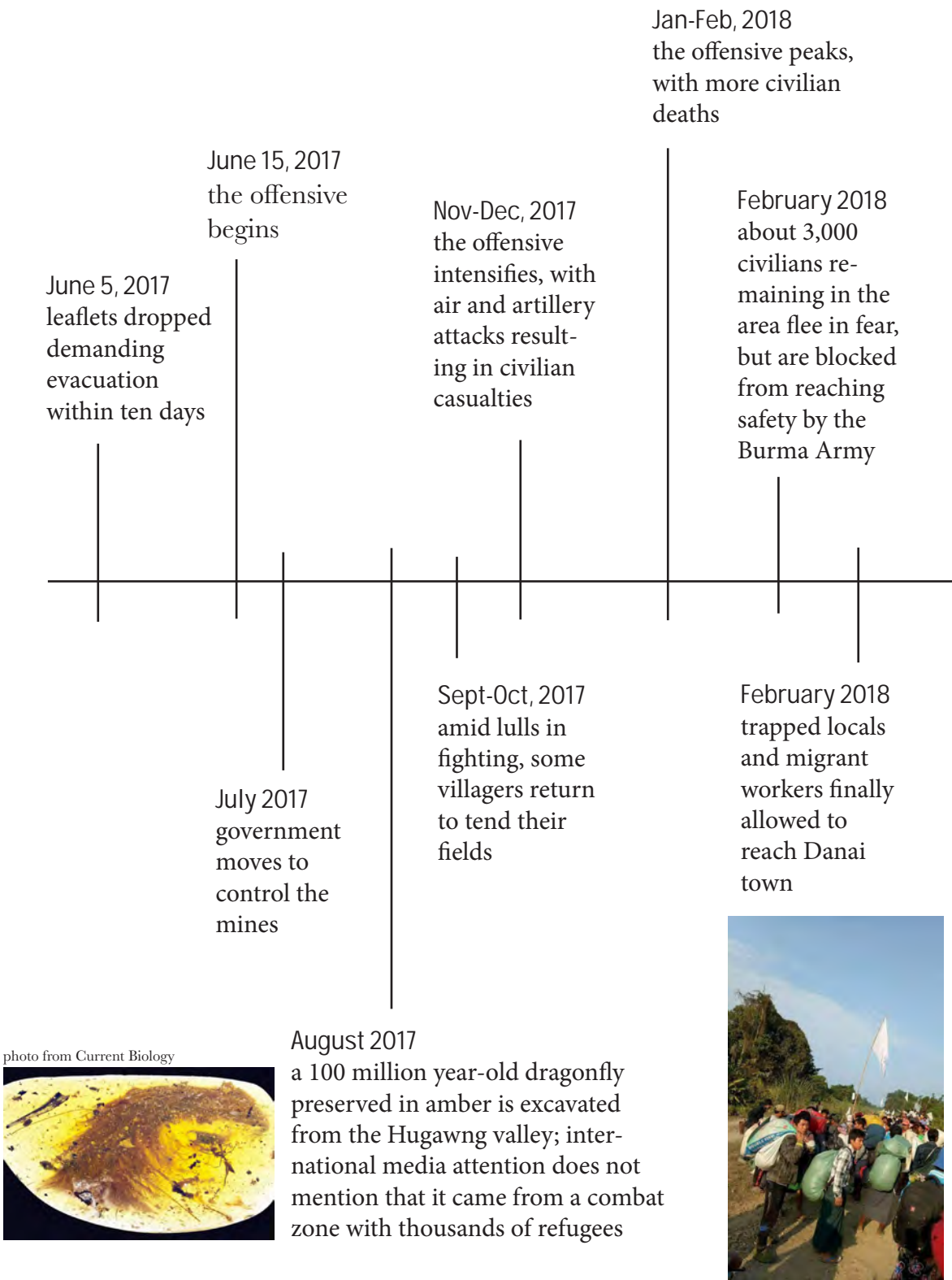


photo from local residents

*Villagers gather what possessions they can and prepare to flee*



# Hugawng valley offensive: A timeline



February 2018  
Burma Army  
now occupies  
KIA posts in the  
amber mining  
area, and has  
cleared out all  
local and migrant  
civilians under  
the premise of  
“environmental  
protection”

*Aung Lawt village, now abandoned*



April 2018  
offensive spreads;  
the 300 house-  
holds of Aung  
Lawt village are  
forced to flee

Today  
to date no action  
has been taken and  
refugees remain  
trapped in limbo,  
more than one year  
after they were told  
to evacuate their  
homes

February  
2018-today  
the govern-  
ment denies  
the existence  
of any IDPs

June-July 2018  
mining resumes  
in the Hugawng  
amber region

Sept 2018  
local MPs  
request  
legalization  
of mining,  
legitimiz-  
ing central  
government  
control  
of amber  
production

Oct 2018  
displaced villagers  
write an open letter  
to the president to  
protest the granting  
of mining rights in  
their home area and  
ask to be allowed to  
return home

photo by Hkun Lat







*Local farmers prepare vehicles to transport fleeing villagers*

### ***Government moves to control the mines***

Despite national and international hopes for an end to military dictatorship with Burma's 2015 elections, the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) has raised no objection to this forced evacuation of indigenous Kachin people from their land, or to the violent offensive and civilian casualties that unfolded in the following months.

One month after the military offensive began, NLD Member of Parliament U Lin Lin Oo began securing "legal" authority over the amber industry for the central government, by submitting a proposal to parliament to control "illegal" gold and amber mining in Danai and Hpakant (see Appendix 5). This was the first

step in formalizing the government's authority over the amber mines.

### ***International actors silent***

In August 2017, a 100-million year-old dragonfly preserved in amber from the Hugawng valley was named after British naturalist David Attenborough. No mention was made in international media that the fossil was sourced from a combat zone that has created thousands of refugees.

The combat zone was squarely inside the Hugawng Valley Tiger Reserve. But conservation groups active in the valley, particularly the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), have been muted in their response to the forced evacuation of indigenous people.<sup>4</sup> Like its silence on the establishment of monocrop

plantations in the reserve, WCS has not called for more regulation and monitoring of the amber mining going on in the reserve.

### ***Fighting drags on and escalates***

During lulls in the fighting, some Kachin villagers returned to their homes and lands to take care of their crops and animals. Some migrant workers also returned. As the 2017 rainy season ended, the offensive intensified again, this time with air and artillery attacks. On November 22, 2017, “An aerial bomb exploded next to a civilian’s house, killing a young child and a man,”<sup>5</sup> and two villagers were injured by Burma Army land mines. Burma army soldiers shot directly at villagers in December, and killed one. On December 27 a jet fighter dropped bombs near N-Ga Ga.

On January 26, 2018 at 2:25 pm, Burma Army Brigade No. 2 dropped bombs from two fighter jets while conducting attacks in the area of KIA’s No.14 battalion. The shelling killed three civilians; five people were seriously injured and sent to the Danai hospital. Five civilian houses were burned down at the same time. A United Nations Fact Finding Mission documented numerous detailed findings of violence against civilians on the part of Burma’s military from November 2017 to February 2018.<sup>6</sup>



Lahpai Seng Ra, a 30 year-old community health worker, was killed by an aerial strike on January 26, 2018, leaving her 3 year-old daughter motherless

### ***Civilians are prevented from escaping or receiving aid***

On January 28, 2018, an estimated 3,000 people remaining in the area fled in fear for their lives, going north from Pa Yin Maw towards Pawk Wa, a KIA tax gate now under the control of the Burma Army, on the Danai River. The Burma military blocked them from crossing the river to reach safety in Danai, instead keeping them trapped in Nam Gawn and Paukwa. They were held for eleven days without proper food or healthcare. The men were forced to remove their clothes for long periods to be searched, and women were molested during frisking. Motorbikes, mobile phones, money, and other property were confiscated. Aid groups were not allowed to deliver emergency provisions.

On January 29, 2018, Members of Parliament U Lin Lin Oo and U Naung Naja Tang submitted a letter to the Speaker of the People's Assembly asking for help for 3,000 "migrant workers" trapped by the fighting. The letter did not mention the many local indigenous Kachin villagers among the 3,000 displaced, erasing them from public record.

### ***Government denies existence of IDPs***

When the trapped civilians were finally released on February 8, 2018, the central government maintained

that there were no IDPs from the offensive, and refused to allow refugee camps to be built. Those who could, stayed with relatives in Danai or Myitkyina. Those with nowhere else to go camped in Danai's churchyards, where they remain today, still not recognized as refugees or IDPs. The central government insistence that all those displaced by the offensive are migrant workers denies the existence of over 4,000 indigenous residents, and leaves them trapped without a home. They are in temporary shelters: they are not allowed to return home, but they also are not allowed to receive the benefits of designation as internal refugees or IDPs.

A Kachin woman from Nam Gawn village described her family's situation now living in a church compound in Danai:

After the warning leaflets were dropped from the helicopter, we fled the village carrying nothing but thin blankets. We are now living in one small room—seven people in one family. There are not enough bathrooms and toilets. Living here is not happy like in our village. Even though local CSOs now provide some assistance, we cannot live like we did back in our village. I do thank those who came to help us.

Father, mother, and adult children have to live all together in one small room in the camp, so this is very difficult for us. I want to go back to our village. Here I can do nothing and I do not have land to grow food. In our village we were able to support ourselves by farming. Here we just spend money but have nothing for income. Only in our village do we have the chance to earn income, and here it is very difficult for us to live.

Another woman, from N-Ga Ga village, who is also living in a church

compound in Danai, said, through her tears:

I don't know if this offensive is connected to amber mining, but maybe it is. Because the amber is being looted, we the indigenous people have been displaced and are suffering. I am very sad for our children's future. I don't know how long we will have to live like this. Here we have to live and eat under the camp committee's management, but we prefer to live on our land by farming. We want to go back to our original village.



photo by Hkam Lat

*Approximately 700 indigenous people from the amber region are living in four crowded church yards, unable to return home and denied humanitarian aid*



## Burma Military Presence in Hugawng Valley before June 2017





## Burma Military Presence in Hugawng Valley in April 2018



### ***Control cemented***

By February 2018, the Burma Army had occupied the former KIA bases in the amber region, giving them control over the mines and the transportation routes in and out. The amber region was now patrolled by Burma Army soldiers who had shoot-to-kill orders. This put the villages of Nambyu-Namkham, Nam Gawn, Htang Bra, Woi Law, and N-Ga Ga off limits to the very residents that established them.

### ***Intimidation by government and military***

In April 2018, fighting spread from the amber region offensive to other areas of the Hugawng Valley. An estimated 2,000 people, mainly women and children, were trapped by government forces in Awng Lawt (Danai Township) and Lai Nawng Hku (Kamai Township). Local organizations, churches and community leaders asked the Burma Army's Regional Operations Command 2 based in Danai for permission to rescue the IDPs, but were told it did not have the authority to grant the request. The groups also sent a letter on April 12 to the Kachin State Chief Minister asking for access to assist the IDPs, but they did not receive a response. Finally, on April 30 nearly 5,000 people marched in the streets of Myitkyina, calling on the government to ensure safe evac-

uation of the trapped civilians.

On May 8, Lieutenant Colonel Myo Min Oo from the Burma Army's Northern Command filed criminal defamation complaints under Article 500 of the Penal Code against three protesters, Lum Zawng, Zau Jat, and Nang Pu. The three had distributed photographs and evidence demonstrating the conditions of the IDPs at a press conference. On December 7, the Myitkyina township court sentenced each to six months imprisonment and a 500,000-kyat fine for defamation of the military.

### ***Mining resumes***

In June and July 2018, mining resumed in the amber area. On September 17, 2018, NLD Member of Parliament Lin Lin Oo, representing Danai, and MP Tint Soe, representing Hpakant, again requested government approval for small-scale amber and gold mining in their districts, which was granted. This legitimized central government control of amber production. Whether, and when the military will extend its authority and profits further, by granting concessions for industrial-scale amber mining, remains to be seen.



## Local responses to the offensive and its aftermath

### ***Humanitarian support—only from locals***

Four local churches in Danai are currently sheltering approximately 700 refugees from the amber region. Hundreds more are staying with relatives. Several Kachin-based organizations are providing for basic needs, such as shelter materials, rice, oil and salt. None of the refugees have received international support.

### ***Request to return home***

On October 12, 2018, villagers from 363 households in the amber region published an open letter to the President of Burma. The letter provides a history of their villages dating prior to the British colonial period, proving that families have been living there for generations. It

describes the offensive and how their land and property has essentially been seized by the Burma Army. It then details how unbearable their current situation is and requests that the government allow them to return home:

Since we the indigenous people from Nambyu, Namkham, and N-gaga villages fled from a military offensive and are living as refugees in Danai church compounds and relatives' houses, we are facing a difficult situation in terms of finances, education, livelihood, health, and accommodation. Every day we face depression and isolation due to mental and physical stress since being



displaced by the military. Our children have no hope for education, health care, or development for a better future. Therefore, in order to immediately resolve all the problems we are facing, the local IDPs urge your excellency that the Burmese government should implement a program allowing us to return home to ensure the respect of our indigenous people's dignity and freedom to work at our local livelihoods again in our homelands.

The letter also warns that if amber mining is allowed to continue, their homes and lands may be permanently destroyed:

After we fled from the offensive, the Weekly Headline News on September 3, 2018 quoted U Kyaw Kyaw Win, member of parliament from no. 2 constituency of Monyin township and member of Kachin State natural resources committee, as saying "According to Act 97/a of Burma mining law, mining concessions should be designated for small miners so that the government of Myanmar can have income from taxing revenues...." But if natural resource extraction is allowed to be implemented on the lands and houses we had

to abandon temporarily due to the offensive, we worry that our original lands will be destroyed and we will have many problems as a consequence.

Therefore, we humbly send this petition to the President of the Union of Burma to ask the respective departments to protect the rights of indigenous peoples, and not implement mining projects on the lands that local peoples have been forced to abandon temporarily.

The president's office replied to the villagers on November 5, acknowledging that it had received the request and that it would "carry out as necessary." On November 6, the villagers received a copy of a letter from the Kachin State Parliament Office to the Chief Minister of Kachin State. It stated:

In accordance with the Kachin State parliament Act 178, 2013, we the Kachin State Parliament brokered the letter of 363 villagers and Mr. Gam Hpang to be implemented as needed and to reply as to the preparations being taken.

Since then, no action has been taken and the indigenous people of Hugawng's amber region remain trapped in uncertainty.

## ANALYSIS

### ***Repeated pattern of Burma Army seizure of Kachin resources***

The offensive in the amber region of the Hugawng Valley is the latest in the Burma Army's repeated violent attempts to expand its territory into Kachin areas and profit from the resources there. For more than a decade, KDNG has been documenting this pattern, and the human and environmental destruction that is left in its wake (see list of publications at the back of this report).

In Hugawng itself, the government granted Yuzana, a military-linked company, 200,000 acres of land in 2006 to establish monocrop plantations within the boundaries of the internationally recognized tiger reserve in the valley. The plantations resulted in the razing of huge areas of tiger habitat, destruction of long-standing small-scale local farms, and the poisoning of local waterways. According to an interview with two local elders from Warazup village, The Light Infantry Battalion 297 gave Yuzana employees military training and equipped them with arms (Interview No. 1). In August 2016, Burma Army tanks came out of Yuzana's company compound to shell KIA positions.

In Hpakant, the government used

military force to take over the world's richest jade mines and then granted concessions to crony companies, resulting in enormous profits for the military and the government. Large-scale destructive mining practices have wrecked the ecosystem and displaced local people. After establishing authority over various areas of mineral deposits in Kachin State, the government issues mining concessions to corporations with military connections. Industrial mining has destroyed ecosystems and communities, as mountains were torn down, and mercury and cyanide from gold mines leached into streams and rivers, poisoning local populations.

Across Kachin State, the government is planning mega projects without the consultation or consent of local residents. Thousands have already been forcibly moved for the Irrawaddy Myitsone dam project, which is technically "suspended." Like those in Danai, they remain trapped in an uncertain life, unable to return to their homes.

This pattern of "ceasefire development," practiced during 1994-2011, witnessed a drastic expansion of Burma Army troops together with destructive development projects. Land and authority was ceded to the

central government and resources were stolen from future generations with no benefits streaming back to the state. One local elder reflected:

The ceasefire agreement of 1994 was a great victory for the military government. Before 1994, there were only a few government troops in the Hugawng area. Later checkpoints were everywhere, and the number of government troops increased gradually. At present it is evident that the government purchases weapons with the money it gains from the natural resources of Kachin State to wage war here. (Interview No. 7)

In 2010 the central government demanded that the KIA either disarm or serve as a national border guard force, rather than seeking a genuine political solution to the conflict. Since neither was acceptable to the KIA, the Burma Army broke the ceasefire with renewed attacks on KIA positions in 2011. The election of the civilian NLD government has not changed this pattern of state violence. The military remains in power; state governments and ethnic peoples have no significant powers to determine the use of their resources, and those who speak out are intimidated and jailed.

### ***False premise #1: “Protecting the environment”***

The leaflets dropped by military helicopter on June 5, 2017 stated in Burmese:

1. In Danai township, gold and amber mining, which is not authorized by the government, is taking place in Htangbra, Wan Pala, Awng Lawt, Tung Mani, Chaung Sone, Nam Byu, Ja Awng Ba, Zi Phyu Kung, Nyaung Pin Kung and Nam Kawn, and is destroying the environment and biodiversity of this region. Therefore, the Tatmadaw will carry out clearance operations in these areas soon.
2. Thus, local peoples and migrant workers who are living in these areas have until 15 June 2017 to leave. **Anyone who does not leave by this date will be classified as cooperating with KIA (Kachin) insurgents.** This announcement is made in order that civilians are not injured or killed during the clearance operation. [emphasis added]

Although the leaflet claimed that the clearance operation was designed to protect the environment, central government policy in Kachin State and elsewhere in Burma has done just the opposite. In recent years,



government-granted jade mining concessions have destroyed entire ecosystems, government-sanctioned gold mining has dumped cyanide and mercury into local water sources, dam projects have destroyed biodiversity, and in the Hugawng Valley Tiger Reserve, the largest tiger reserve in the world, the government granted an industrial agriculture concession to the Yuzana corporation, which displaced local communities and razed huge tracts of forest.

The language in point 2 of the leaflet practically admits that the “clearance” operation was intended not to clear out “illegal miners,” but rather KIA “insurgents.” This intention is made clearer by the resumption of mining just one year after the offensive, and the formal approval of mining in the area by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection in September 2018.

The approval formally ratified government authorization of mining, which just one year earlier, on environmental grounds, it had launched a military offensive to stop. The fact that less than one year after the area was cleared of local residents and migrant miners, the government has granted permission for mining to

restart, shows that the motive was never environmental protection, but only to seize land and assume centralized control of the amber mines.

The authorization also opened up the potential for increased licit mining, which could lead to heavy industrial mining, in the pattern of government-granted concessions in nearby jade and gold mining areas. Indeed, the residents of the amber region are worried that they may never have a home to go back to.

### ***False premise #2: Legalizing mining controls the industry and benefits people***

In their letter to the President’s Office, Parliamentarians Lin Lin Oo and Tint Soe argue that legalizing amber mining in Danai and Hpakant will “prevent the loss of the country’s natural resources” and “generate revenue for the Union.” Yet despite legalization of the jade mining industry in Hpakant, the vast majority of jade is exported wholesale to China, generating little revenue for the Union, and no benefits for local people or Kachin State. “Legal” mining is also not regulated, and civil groups that try to monitor the situation are intimidated.

## Conclusion and solutions

The Hugawng amber mines are in indigenous Kachin lands, but today they are controlled by the central government in Naypyidaw. Local people displaced from their homes in the amber mining area remain in church yards, with billions of dollars worth of amber passing them by as it is transported over the border into China.

Central authority over the land and resources of Kachin State has created decades of conflict that cannot be resolved under the 2008 Constitution. The terms of land rights and resource ownership must be changed to bring peace to all people of Burma through resource federalism.

Key short-term actions in the Hugawng amber mining area, government and international responses to Burma's military aggression, and constitutional change are the pathway to long-term peace in Burma.

### Short-term action

#### ***The Union and Kachin State governments:***

- Allow humanitarian aid to reach IDPs living in camps and church yards in Danai and the Hugawng Valley
- End Burma Army expansion and offensives in the Hugawng Valley and other ethnic areas of Burma
- Allow displaced villagers to return to their homes without threat of violence

#### ***Foreign governments and organizations:***

- Publicly condemn Burma Army violence and seizing of indigenous lands
- Freeze economic investment and peace process funding until the Burma military stops its offensives against Kachin and other ethnic peoples
- Send humanitarian aid to help communities displaced from their homes and livelihoods by military aggression

## Constitutional change

In order to resolve conflict in Kachin State, local people must own, manage, and receive revenues from the natural resources of the land where they live and work. The 2008 Constitution must be amended to make this politically and legally viable.

The 2008 Constitution ensures negative development outcomes by declaring that the central government owns all resources of Burma and has the authority to extract and utilize natural resources as it sees fit. Therefore:

Chapter One, clause 37(a): “The Union (Naypyidaw) is the ultimate owner of all the land, and natural resources above and below the ground, above and beneath the water and in the atmosphere within its territorial boundary.”

Must be changed to:

“The people of Kachin State are the ultimate owners of all lands and all natural resources above and below the ground, above and beneath the water and in the atmosphere within Kachin State.”

And:

Chapter One 37(b) “The Union shall enact necessary laws to supervise extraction and utilization of State-owned natural resources by economic forces.”

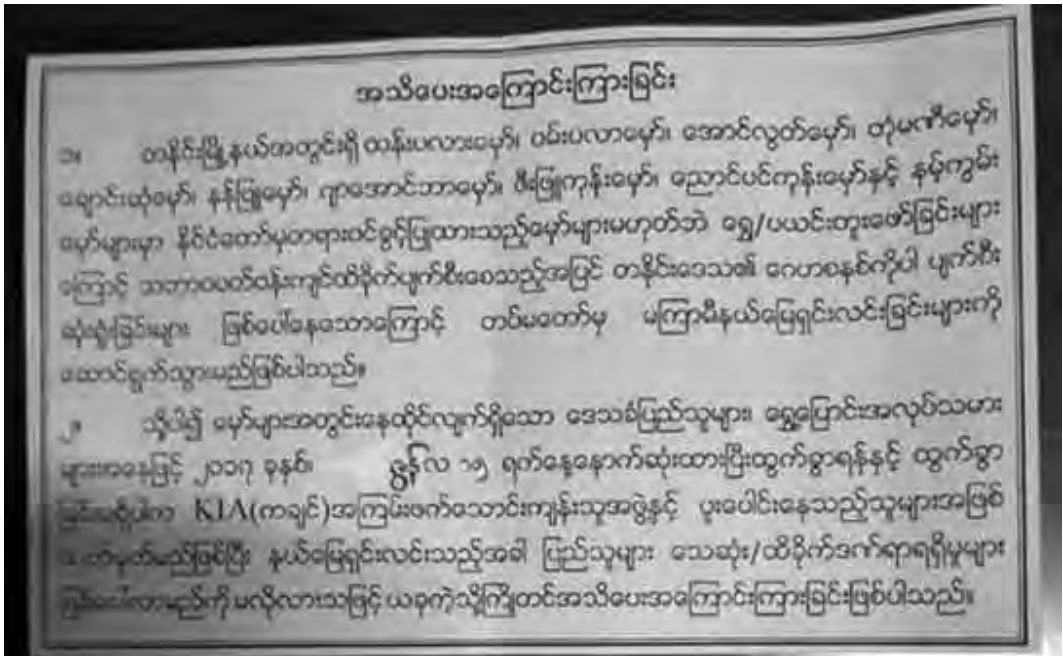
Must be changed to:

“The people of Kachin State shall enact necessary laws to supervise extraction and utilization of State-owned natural resources by economic forces.”



## Appendix 1





Warning notice dropped from the sky on June 5, 2017



### GIVING NOTICE

1. In Danai township, gold and amber mining, which is not authorized by the government, is taking place in Htangbra, Wan Pala, Awng Lawt, Tung Mani, Chaung Sone, Nam Byu, Ja Awng Ba, Zi Phyu Kung, Nyaung Pin Kung and Nam Kawn, and is destroying the environment and biodiversity of this region. Therefore, the Tatmadaw will carry out clearance operations in these areas soon.
2. Thus, local peoples and migrant workers who are living in these areas have until 15 June 2017 to leave. Anyone who does not leave by this date will be classified as cooperating with KIA (Kachin) insurgents. This announcement is made in order that civilians are not injured or killed during the clearance operation.

## Appendix 2: Statement by Kachin political parties on the offensive



### KPCC statement on new Burma Army offensive in Hugawng Valley

No: 008/2017  
Date: 21/06/2017

1. On June 5, 2017, only days after the recent 21<sup>st</sup> Century Panglong Conference was completed, the Burma Army distributed leaflets by helicopter ordering thousands of Kachin State residents to flee their homes and farms in Hugawng Valley to make way for a military offensive claiming to stop illegal mining.
2. People from nine villages, who have been farming this area for generations, have been uprooted, and have joined the over 100,000 Kachin displaced since the resumption of conflict six years ago. Given the experience of other people forced out of resource-rich areas in Kachin State by the Burma Army, it is unlikely that they will ever be able to return to reclaim their homes and farms.
3. This expansion of war is not the way to obtain a peaceful settlement in Burma. Forcing sustainable communities of their land under a new scorched earth operation does not build trust. It builds fear and anger.
4. The end of conflict can only come with political dialogue achieving a democratic federal union, where the people of Kachin State can determine how to manage their own resources and lands and protect the environment in which they live.

**To Contact:**

- (1) U Jaw San Naw (KDP) 09793608893
- (2) U Galau Lang Yaw (KNC) 09402763018
- (3) U LumDau (LNUDP) 09400036931
- (4) U Tu Raw (KSDP) 0947020087

## Appendix 3

### Open Letter from Hugawng Valley Internal Refugees to the President

To the President

President's Office of the Union of Burma

Naypyidaw

October 12, 2018

Subject: A petition that urges the government to stop the use of villagers' land to mine natural resources, and to allow the safe return home of internal refugees who were displaced from Namhkam and N-Ga Ga villages in Hugawng valley in Danai, Kachin State, so that they may freely pursue their local livelihoods again.

Your Excellency the President,

We the indigenous people of Namhkam and N-Ga Ga from Hugawng valley in Danai, Kachin State, respectfully urge the following:

#### Background

- The Hugawng valley was ruled by twelve Kachin Chiefs before the British colonial government arrived. Nambyu, Namhkam, and N-Ga Ga villages were ruled by Walawbum Duwa, Anai Duwa, and Lahpai Duwa (Duwa refers to a Kachin chief). When the British arrived, those areas were allowed to continue to be ruled by the Kachin Chiefs. Even when the parliament ruling system changed in the country, the Kachin Chiefs continued govern the Hugawng Valley. When Burmese socialism ruled the country, those villages were still administered with a village council system. In 1964, the local villagers living in Kawngjaga, Samsaga, Kumnenga, Hkyetdan Awnglawga, Htanbum, Ngamawga, Hparawmga, Lalawngga, Ngandiga, Ngamga, Magaga, and Maruga were suffering from attacks in a military offensive. In 1966, the Union Government combined the villagers from Hkasan, Kawngja, Ka-antringya, Jaawngyang, Samsa, Palen, Dinghkun, Namhkampa, Nawngwam, and Zikawng village into a new settled named Nambyu-Namhkam, later replaced by Zikawng village in 1986. That same year, Mr. Nhkum Naw Sam was appointed to serve as the village head during the time of Sama Htingnan Du, Danai Party chairman and Colonel Myint Maung, council chairman of Danai. The Government of the Union of Burma provided a budget for education, health, and development sectors and also sup-

ported the issuing of National ID cards. Villagers worked for the government's military, and farmers paid rice tax to the government. Mr. Lashi Naw was appointed as the village head in Nambyu-Namhkam village during the time of the State Law and Order Restoration Council after 1988.

- After signing of the ceasefire agreement between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Burmese government in 1994, the village was developed to have a middle school, village clinic, and other basic infrastructure. At the same time the villagers living there provided for themselves well with farming work. As the 2008 Constitution was adopted, those villages had to give support to the administrative system. Nambyu, Namhkam, and Ngaga villages had to vote in the 2010 election because they were appointed a constituency-2 area. This is significant, as these villages did not come into existence because of migrant miners, but already existed with generations of Kachin villagers living here with their own governance.
- On June 5, 2017 a helicopter dropped leaflets in Nambyu, Namhkam, Ngaga and other villages which each have long histories, warning that the people living there have to leave by June 15, 2017. After that on June 6, 2017, we indigenous people had to flee, fearing an offensive attack. We became refugees here in Danai Church compounds and relatives' houses and have no chance to go back to our homes.
- The refugees from N-Ga Ga village number over 200 villagers from 45 households, and those from Nambyu and Namhkam villages are over 2,500 villagers from 500 households.

## Recommendations

1. Since we the indigenous people from Nambyu, Namkham, and N-Ga Ga villages fled from a military offensive and are living as refugees in Danai church compounds and relatives' houses, we are facing a difficult situation in terms of finances, education, livelihood, health, and accommodation. Every day we face depression and isolation due to mental and physical stress since being displaced by the military. Our children have no hope for education, health care, or development for a better future. Therefore, in order to immediately resolve all the problems we are facing, the local IDPs urge your excellency that the Burmese government should implement a program allowing us to return home to ensure the respect of our indigenous people's dignity and freedom to work at our local livelihoods again in our homelands.



2. After we fled from the offensive, the Weekly Headline News on September 3, 2018 quoted U Kyaw Kyaw Win, member of parliament from no. 2 constituency of Monyin township and member of Kachin State natural resources committee, as saying “According to Act 97/a of Burma mining law, mining concessions should be designated for small miners so that the government of Burma can have income from taxing revenues. At the same time, local people will have job opportunities, but the miners who are now working in a risky situation, facing many difficulties since they are mining amber illegally,” etc. But if natural resource extraction is allowed to be implemented on the lands and houses we had to abandon temporarily due to the offensive, we worry that our original lands will be destroyed and we will have many problems as a consequence.

Therefore, we humbly send this petition to the President of the Union of Burma to ask the respective departments to protect the rights of indigenous peoples, and not implement mining projects on the lands that local peoples have been forced to abandon temporarily.

Petitioners

Namhkam and N-gaga indigenous people  
from Hugawng valley in Danai, Kachin State

The original letter is signed by family leaders from 363 indigenous households

## **Appendix 4: Reply to villagers from the President's Office**

Union of Burma

President's Office

Department of Research, Information, and Claim letter

Letter no. 5(53-9) ( 2058)/6 President Office

Date: November 5, 2018

To: Mr Gam H pang

Hugawng Valley, Danai

Kachin State

Subject: response on receiving of petition letter

1. President office received a petition letter the date with October 16, 2018 from indigenous people and Mr Gam H pang from Nam Kham village, Hugawng valley, Danai, Kachin State requested that villagers' villages and lands should not be targeted for mining concession areas.
2. Regarding that letter President Office will carry out as necessary.

On behalf of Managing Office

(Soe Min Htwe, Manager)

## **Appendix 5: Letter from Kachin State Parliament Office to Chief Minister of Kachin State**

Union Of Burma  
State Parliament Office  
Kachin State  
Letter No. 2/9 – 1/L T – Kachin (1846)  
Date: November 6, 2018

To: Chief Minister  
Kachin State Government  
Myitkyina

Subject: Regarding a petition letter that stated the return of local refugees to their home villages for livelihood and prohibition of mining concession on indigenous people land.

Target: a petition letter the date with October 12, 2018 from 363 villagers including Mr. Gam H pang of Nam Kham and N-Ga Ga village in Hugawng valley, Danai, Kachin State.

1. In term of, the indigenous people from Nambyu, Namkham, and N-Ga Ga villages in Danai fled from a military offensive and are living as refugees in Danai church compounds and relatives' houses; safely return of the local people to their home villages; mining concession should not be implemented in their home villages; and protecting the rights of local villagers, 363 villagers including Mr. Gam H pang sent a copy to related Government Office. In response of this, chairperson of Kachin State parliament understood that "this should be brokered to be quickly implemented by the Government".
2. In accordance with the Kachin State parliament act 178, 2013, we the Kachin State Parliament brokered the letter of 363 villagers and Mr. Gam H pang to be implemented as needed as to the preparations being taken.

On Behalf of Chairperson (Hla Oo, In-Charge of Parliament Office )  
Copy:

U Zaw Win, State Parliamentarian, Danai constituency 2  
363 villagers and Mr. Gam H pang, Hugawng valley, Danai

## Appendix 6: Letter from Members of Parliament on civilians displaced by the amber mine offensive

To: The Speaker  
People's Assembly  
Naypyidaw

Date: January 29, 2018

Subject: The blocking of over 3,000 migrant workers in Nam Oon Village and Chaungsone (the area at the confluence of the Danai and Nam Oon streams), Danai township, Kachin State, and requesting help so that these over 3,000 migrant workers can reach Danai town

1. In Danai township, there has been heavy fighting between the Tatmadaw and an ethnic armed group (KIO/KIA).
2. Due to this fighting, over 3,000 migrant workers who have been working in the amber mines, have been investigated and blocked by the Tatmadaw. We have been informed by our constituents that these workers are now trapped in Nam Oon Village and Chaungsone (the area at the confluence of the Danai and Nam Oon streams), Danai township, Kachin State, and asked to provide help.
3. Therefore, we are appealing to the Speaker to arrange help for the over 3,000 migrant workers, who are citizens, trapped in Nam Oon village and Chaungsone in Danai township to have safe passage to Danai town.

Respectfully

U Naung Naja Tang  
Upper House Representative  
Constituency 4, Kachin State

U Lin Lin Oo  
Lower House Representative  
Danai Constituency, Kachin State



## Appendix 7: Proposal to the President by Members of Parliament

To: The President  
The President's Office  
The Union of Burma  
Date: September 17, 2018

Subject: A submission letter to the government of the Union of Burma to immediately allow artisanal mining of gold and amber in Danai and Hpakant townships in Kachin State.

Regarding the above matter:

1. In the second round of the fifth parliamentary annual meeting, which started from July 7, 2017, a proposal was sent on July 30 to the Government of the Union of Burma by U Lin Lin Oo, a parliamentarian from Danai, and supported by U Tint Soe, a parliamentarian from Hpakant, that: "The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation and the state government should effectively handle the issue of illegal gold and amber mining occurring now, so that it does not happen again in the future. (Attached – 1)
2. Regarding this proposal, U Ohn Win, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, responded: "If the Kachin State government grants legal mining permits for small scale jade mines, and for artisanal amber and gold mining, there will not be illegal gold and amber mining in the future." (Attached – 2)
3. The gold and amber extraction areas in Danai township (Nambyu, Ziphyukung Tungmani) were controlled by the ethnic armed group KIO in the past but now these areas are completely controlled by the Tatmadaw. However, it has been learned that some people are still doing illegal mining in those areas according to local sources, constituents and social media.
4. Therefore
  - (a) to prevent the loss of the country's natural resources
  - (b) to address the problem of citizens' joblessness and living difficulty
  - (c) to generate revenue for the Union of Burma

We urge the President of the Government of the Union of Burma to help to legalize artisanal mining of amber, gold and other minerals in Danai and Hpakant townships in Kachin state.

(1) Proposal (copy)

(2) Minister's explanation (copy)

U Tint Soe

Parliamentarian

Hpakant Constituency

U Lin Lin Oo

Parliamentarian

Danai Constituency

Copies to:

1. State Counselor, the Office of the State Counselor, Naypyidaw
2. Chairperson of Security, Peace and Stability and the Rule of Law Working Committee, Naypyidaw
3. Chairperson of Economic Co-ordination Committee, Naypyidaw
4. Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Naypyidaw

## Appendix 8: Interviews conducted for this report

No	Date	Age	Gender	Occupation	Residence
1	Jan 2017	62	Male	CBO	Warazup
2	Jan 2018	55	Male	CBO	Warazup
3	Jan 2017	40	Male	Pastor	Danai
4	Jan 2017	36	Male	CBO	Kawng Ra
5	Jan 2017	36	Male	Pastor	N-Ga Ga
6	Jan 2017	69	Male	Village Elder	Danai
7	Jan 2017	60	Male	Village Elder	Danai
8	Jan 2017	59	Male	Village Elder	Danai
9	Jan 2019	40	Female	Villager	N-Ga Ga
10	Jan 2019	38	Female	Villager	Nam Gawn
11	Sept 2018	34	Female	Villager	Nam Hkam
12	Sept 2018	32	Female	Villager	N-Ga Ga
13	Sept 2018	33	Female	Villager	Nam Gawn
14	Sept 2018	50	Female	Villager	Htang Bra
15	March 2019	44	Male	Villager	Nam Hkam
16	2018	38	Male	Businessman	Amber Region
17	2018	40	Male	Villager	Amber Region
18	2018	56	Male	KIA	Amber Region
19	2018	40	Male	KIA	Amber Region
20	2017	44	Male	Businessman	Amber Region
21	2017	50	Male	Businessman	Amber Region

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The Bulletin of The Natural History Museum, Volume 56, Number 1, 29 June 2000.
- <sup>2</sup> “The Amber Road: Cross-Border Trade and the Regulation of the Burmite Market in Tengchong, Yunnan,” Alessandro Rippa and Yi Yang, *Trans –Regional and –National Studies of Southeast Asia*, Vol. 5, No. 2, July 2017, pp. 243-267.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>4</sup> <https://coconuts.co/yangon/news/conflict-threatens-myanmars-dwindling-tiger-population/>
- <sup>5</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council. 2018. Report of the detailed findings of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, paragraph 310. At <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/Index.aspx>
- <sup>6</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/Index.aspx>
- <sup>7</sup> <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/ongoing-offensives-tanai-leave-idps-trapped-warring-sides.html>
- <sup>8</sup> <https://kdng.org/2001/07/15/tyrants-tycoons-and-tigers/>
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.kachinlandnews.com/?p=26817>
- <sup>10</sup> See <https://www.scribd.com/document/7632100/Blood-Jade> and <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/oil-gas-and-mining/myanmarjade/>



KDNG envisions a future in which:

- All people in Kachin State are physically secure and do not need to fear military violence.
- All people can improve the quality of their lives. The gap between the rich and poor decreases.
- Local people experience minimal harm from natural resource extraction and receive maximum benefit.
- All people receive a standard set of social services including education and health care.
- All people participate in local governance and decisions without restriction.
- The natural resources of Kachin State are used sustainably in order to benefit generation after generation.

In order to achieve this vision, KDNG's mission is:

- To help build a genuine federal democracy.
- To implement a bottom-up development process in which local affected peoples are consulted and involved.
- To improve the transparency of natural resource extraction and development projects among local people, government, and corporations.
- To see that local people receive the benefits of natural resources in Kachin State through the ownership and management of their own natural resources
- To amend the constitution so that:
  - A state government elected by the people has the right to directly manage natural resource extraction and development projects, and gives local people decision-making power.
  - A state government allows affected people the right to hold referendums for large-scale projects to determine local consent.
  - The state government collects taxes and shares revenues from natural resources, the majority of which remain in Kachin State, putting local people first.
  - Kachin State education, economy, health, and infrastructure development programs are implemented with natural resource taxes and revenues from the Kachin State administration or lower-level government bodies.



Kachin Development Networking Group

KDNG was set up in 2004 in Kachin State to promote sustainable development, equality, and justice.

Published in August 2019. All photos are by KDNG unless noted.

KDNG would like to thank all those who supported this report.

*Front cover photos:* A piece of blood amber in the Myitkina market; Kachin peoples at traditional manau festival in Danai; the abandoned village of Nambyu-Namhkam; fleeing the offensive with only white flags for protection



**Kachin Development Networking Group**  
**[www.kdng.org](http://www.kdng.org)**