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## BURMA'S ETHNIC CEASEFIRE AGREEMENTS

Since implementing recent political reforms, the Thein Sein government has attempted to make a number of state level ceasefire agreements with both previous ceasefire groups and other anti-government forces.<sup>1</sup> On 13 January 2012, the Burmese government signed an initial peace agreement with the Karen National Union. The agreement, the third such agreement with ethnic opposition forces within two months, signals a radical change with how previous Burmese governments have dealt with ethnic grievances.

Up until the recent negotiations and the outbreak of hostilities in Kachin State there had been three main ethnic groups with armies fighting against the government. These armies are the Karen National Liberation Army, which has between six and seven thousand troops, the Shan State Army – South, which has between six and seven thousand troops, and the Karenni Army, fielding between eight hundred to fifteen hundred troops. In addition to the three main groups there are also the Chin National Front with approximately two to three hundred troops and the Arakan Liberation Army (ALA) with roughly one hundred troops.<sup>2</sup>

Under previous military regimes, the ethnic question had been dealt with as a military matter and not as a political or constitutional issue. Consequently, the failure of the Burmese government to recognize the true nature of the ethnic struggle resulted in constant civil war. As a result, over a hundred and fifty thousand refugees have been forced to shelter in neighbouring countries due to a conflict that has been characterized by its myriad human rights abuses.

### PREVIOUS AGREEMENTS

The Thein Sein government has dropped a number of requirements that previous regimes had made in relation to setting conditions for talks. One of the most important was the fact that a ceasefire must be agreed to prior to discussions taking place. Recent talks have taken place without this condition and unlike previous attempts at peace the Burmese authorities have not demanded weapons to be surrendered first.

Another previous condition was the insistence that all talks must take place inside Burma. This was also recently negated with exploratory talks taking place in Thailand with the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army – South (RCSS/SSA), The Chin National Front (CNF) and the Karen National Union (KNU) and in China with the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO).

According to media reports<sup>3</sup> the Burmese government has set the following conditions in relation to conducting agreements with the ethnic groups:

1. Not to secede from the Union
2. Agree to non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national unity and perpetuation of national sovereignty
3. Agree to cooperate in joint economic programs
4. Agree to cooperate in anti-narcotics programs

5. Formation of political party or to contest elections
6. Accept 2008 constitution and legally amend it as necessary
7. One national armed forces

Nonetheless, despite such conditions, agreements written thus far with non-ceasefire groups have not included any of these points and may be discussed at the future Union level meetings.

### RESTORATION COUNCIL OF SHAN STATE/SHAN STATE ARMY – SOUTH (RCSS/SSA)

The Shan State Army – South (Formerly Shan United Revolutionary Army) was formed from remnants of the Mong Tai Army after Khun Sa signed a ceasefire with the State Law and Order Restoration Council in January 1996. The Shan State Army – South, under the command of Lt. General Yawd Serk, is believed to be one of the strongest of the ethnic resistance groups with more than seven thousand troops.<sup>4</sup>

In total it has 5 fixed bases, the Loi Taileng H.Q. (opposite Pang Mapha District, Mae Hong Son), Loi Moong Merng (opposite Muang District, Mae Hong Son), Loi Lam (Wiang Haeng District, Chiang Mai), Loi Hsarm Hsip (opposite Fang district, Chiang Mai) and Loi Gawwan (opposite Mae Fa Luang District, Chiang Rai).<sup>5</sup> The SSA-S was the first group to formally agree to a ceasefire with the government on 3 December 2011.

The SSA-S is not a member of the United National Federal Council but was a member of the six-state military alliance which included the KNU, CNF, ALP, KNPP and the KNO.<sup>6</sup> On 21 May 2011 the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), announced that it was combining with the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA), formerly the Shan State Army – North. The SSPP/SSA had faced a government offensive that had begun in March 2011 and the SSA-S had fought alongside its troops. Fighting in the area around the SSPP/SSA Headquarters stopped in December and BA forces have been withdrawn; the Burmese government does not seem to be planning any further offensives against the group. The RCSS/SSA agreement with the Burmese government does not extend to the SSPP/SSA.<sup>7</sup>

The RCSS/SSA held its first meeting with the Burmese government on the 19 November 2011. At this meeting the SSA-S tabled the following four points for future negotiations:

1. Cessation of hostilities
2. Political negotiations
3. Setting up of a Special Development Zone
4. Cooperation in the drug eradication

According to one media report, Yawd Serk had apparently told one of the government's chief negotiators Aung Min that:

Our people have been living in the dark for more than 50 years. . . It is good that the sun has come up. However, if we are unable to prevent continued inequality and discrimination, another eclipse is bound to come.<sup>8</sup>

A further meeting and signing ceremony with the State Level Peace Group was held on the 2 December 2011. The signed agreement consisted of the following:

1. Cessation of hostilities between the two sides. The two will also exchange ceasefire directives to their respective forces.
2. The RCSS/SSA's 4 point proposal on 19 November is agreed in principle.
3. The two sides will remain at positions agreed upon by both sides.
4. The two sides will coordinate with each other in advance before moving with arms out of designated positions. Designation of areas will be discussed further at the Union level talks.

5. Liaison offices will be established at Taunggyi, Kengtung, Kholam, Tachilek and Mongton with personnel and arms agreed upon by both sides. The Union level talks will discuss designation of new liaison offices.
6. The two sides agree to cooperate in preventing the dangers of narcotics.
7. The RCSS/SSA will form an official delegation in order to hold talks with the Union negotiation team formed by the Union Government and to set a date, time and venue for it
8. The two sides agree to continue to hold talks on remaining subjects<sup>9</sup>

Despite the signing of the agreement there was initial confusion in relation to territory and areas of operation. It had apparently been agreed at the meeting that the SSA-S would be responsible for security in the countryside while the Burma Army would be responsible for major towns and motorways. But, apparently the Burma Army continued to operate as before resulting in an exchange of gunfire on the 20 December 2011 which left three Burmese soldiers wounded. The clash immediately led to some questioning the sincerity of the government.

Regardless, the RCSS/SSA-S held two preliminary meetings with the government's State Level Peace Team. At the first, on 17 December 2011, prior to the clash, the RCSS/SSA-S negotiators stated that the inclusion of the non-secession clause was an impediment to further negotiations. The clause, which the UWSA, the NDAA/ESS (Mongla), and the Klo Htoo Baw Battalion (DKBA Lah Pwe Group) have already agreed to, would render concessions granted at the Panglong agreement and in articles 201 and 202 of the 1947 constitution no longer valid. This is a major concern for a number of ethnic groups who maintain that the Panglong agreement and the 1947 constitution legitimizes their cause and the right to self-determination. Despite reservations over the issues it was finally decided that their concerns would be discussed at the forthcoming Union level meeting. At the second meeting, on 31 December 2011, the issue of delineating a Special Economic Zone was also raised, but, as noted in the agreement, this would also be discussed at the Union level.

The last meeting held on 16 January 2011 increased the number of proposals and clarified further details in relation to the opening of liaison offices. The new agreement stated that:

1. SSA will set up its main offices in Ho Mong, southern Shan State, and Monghta, eastern Shan State.
2. SSA and the Burmese government's negotiating team will continue to discuss on the resettlement and accommodation arrangement of SSA members and families.
3. SSA will be responsible for the administration of its forces. Burma government and SSA will work together in the administration at the township level.
4. Burma army will cooperate with SSA for the security of the two towns where SSA main offices will be established.
5. SSA and Burma army will work together for the security of border checkpoints.
6. There will be advance notification of troops carrying arms on entering another side's controlled areas.
7. Liaison offices will be opened as soon as possible at Taunggyi, the capital city of Shan State; Kholam, where the Central Eastern Command is based; Kengtung, Tachilek and Monghsat, eastern Shan State; and trading offices in Muse and Namkham, northern Shan State.
8. Shan State local governments will be responsible for the support of education and to set up legal trade firms for economic development.
9. SSA and Burma government will continue to discuss for the regional economic development.
10. SSA and Burma government will work together on the elimination of drugs.
11. Burma government agrees in principle SSA proposals at the meeting on 16 January and further topics will be discussed during the upcoming meetings.

Although the new agreement has been signed by both sides, a number of technical issues, primarily the position of Burma Army and SSA troops, still need to be addressed.

## CHIN NATIONAL FRONT

The Chin National Front (CNF) and its armed wing, the Chin National Army (CNA), were founded in the late 1980s to fight for the political rights of the Chin ethnic group. It is active along the Indian-Burma border and regularly crosses this frontier. The CNF/CNA's declared aim is 'securing the self-determination of the Chin people and to establish [a] federal Union of Burma based on democracy and freedom.'

The Chin National Front became a member of the National Democratic Front (NDF) in February 1989, the Democratic Alliance of Burma in July 1992, the six-state military alliance in June 1999, and the UNFC in February 2011.

In January 1997, top leaders from the Peace and Tranquillity Committee, a group comprised of Chin Christian pastors and leaders, proposed to the CNF/CNA to agree on a cease-fire. The Pastors sent by the military regime met with the CNF on four occasions: September 25, 1994, January 25 – 26, 1997, April 20 –21, 1997, and July 9, 1997. During the negotiation process the Burmese regime had insisted on the following points:

1. We will not have talk on political issues;
2. We will talk only rural development issues;
3. The CNF should surrender their arms and live peacefully;
4. The CNF should not be representatives of the Democratic Alliance of Burma or National Democratic Front; and
5. The CNF should not have relationship with other opposition groups once the ceasefire agreement is signed with the military regime.<sup>10</sup>

The CNF refused the peace offer primarily due to the fact that the regime, as had often occurred with peace talks with other armed ethnic opposition groups, refused to engage them politically. And, like other groups, the CNF insisted that for further discussions to take place tri-partite dialogue, between the Burmese Military, The NLD, and all ethnic groups, was the only viable option. The last talks, held in 2007, failed for the same reason. Primarily the military regime had insisted that for further negotiations to take place then the CNF must give their arms.<sup>11</sup>

In a recent interview Dr Suikhar, chief negotiator for the CNF, explained the reasons for now accepting the Burmese governments offer:

There has been communication between the CNF and the then State Law and Order Restoration Council/State Peace and Development Council for a ceasefire since 1994. We held one round of talks with them in 2007. We couldn't sign a ceasefire agreement then because the policy then was to "Exchange arms for peace." We accepted the ceasefire agreement this time around because it's not a ceasefire for the sake of a ceasefire, but it includes the agreement to hold a political dialogue. The government side also agreed to our proposal for a framework for political dialogue.

That said, however, he also cautioned that:

. . . we should understand that a ceasefire is not surrender. Neither is it entering into the 'legal fold.' It is something that opens up the door for a political dialogue. Even people who are legally wedded in the presence of the public and God sometimes get divorced. We should be mindful that this agreement can always be broken.<sup>12</sup>

The full nine point agreement accepted by the State Level Peace Delegation and to be further discussed at the Union level states:

1. The Chin State Government level peace delegation and the Chin National Front have agreed to end mutual hostilities, including armed hostilities, effective from the time of the signing of this agreement.

2. The Chin State Government level peace delegation and the Chin National Front have agreed to open up a Liaison Office in Thantlang so that the points in this agreement may be vigorously implemented. Matters regarding the possibility of opening up Liaison Offices in Tedim and Matupi will be submitted to the relevant bodies, the result of which will be made known at a later date. The parties have agreed that the Chin National Front/Army can temporarily be based out of the areas around three Village Tracts in Thantlang Township: Tlangpi Village Tract, Dawn Village Tract and Zang Tlang Village Tract. Moreover, matters regarding the possibility of having bases in Tedim Township's Zampi and Bukphir Village Tracts, and Paletwa Township's Kung Pin, Para and Pathiantlang Village Tracts, will be submitted to the relevant bodies and the result made known at a later date.
3. The Chin State Government level peace delegation and the Chin National Front have agreed that any unarmed members of the Chin National Front and Chin National Army can freely travel to any place within the Union.
4. The Chin State Government level peace delegation and the Chin National Front have agreed to meet again as soon as possible, so that the parties can arrange a time and date for the Chin National Front and the Union government to hold a discussion. In holding Union level talks, the parties agreed in principle to uphold as basic principles the flourishing of ethnic issues and democracy, in addition to the three national causes.
5. The Chin State Government level peace delegation and the Chin National Front have agreed to allow the Chin National Front and the Chin National Army to freely hold public consultations, so that the desire of the Chin people can be brought forward as the basis of their discussion at the Union-level talks.
6. The Chin State Government level peace delegation and the Chin National Front have agreed to allow international Non-Governmental Organizations to operate freely in Chin State and elsewhere in the Union of Myanmar so that they can tackle the issues facing the Chin people, including the food crisis, lack of medicines, lack of access to clean water etc., in accordance with the existing laws.
7. The Chin State Government level peace delegation and the Chin National Front have agreed that, with financial support from the Union government, the Chin National Front will take a leading role in development work in relation to the Special Economic Zone (hereinafter SEZ) in accordance with laws governing the SEZ, so that the poorest state in the Union of Myanmar can be turned into a modern and developed State.
8. The Chin State Government level peace delegation and the Chin National Front have agreed that the Chin National Front and the Chin State Government work together as necessary, on development projects in Chin State by reciprocating advice and consulting with one another.
9. The Chin State Government level peace delegation and the Chin National Front have agreed to closely cooperate in eradicating illegal poppy cultivation, drug business and drug smuggling in northern Chin State.<sup>13</sup>

## KAREN NATIONAL UNION

The KNU rebellion is the longest running in the world today and throughout its 63-year history has presented one of the most serious challenges to the central government. Since the beginning of hostilities, officially declared on 31 January 1949, the Karen National Union has held a number of discussions with successive governments of Burma. While initial discussions centred on the recognition of a free Karen state of 'Kawthoolei' and the need to retain arms, later talks, primarily those that began in 2004, sought merely to protect the Karen populace from further abuses at the hands of the Burmese army and preserve some form of role for the organisation.

One of the main reasons for the lack of progress in earlier talks was the legal status of the Burmese government. For example, the 1995/96 talks with what was then SLORC were hindered by the government's

claim that it could not enter into an official agreement due to the fact that it was a military government and could not act on political matters until after the National Convention.

In addition, the KNU's strategy in attempting to formulate an agreement with the regime has often been shaped by KNU founder Saw Ba U Gyi's four principles which state

1. For us surrender is out of the question
2. The recognition of Karen State must be complete
3. We shall retain our arms
4. We Shall decide our own political destiny

While a reluctance to compromise the above principals shaped early negotiations, the later talks in March 2005, allowed the KNU to retain its arms and provide some limited authority over Karen controlled areas. In addition the offer also included resettling internally displaced Karen to areas under the KNU's control and thus providing a more secure environment for vulnerable Karen populations.

This final offer in 2005, prior to the breakdown of the talks, consisted of the KNU being given a trial period of two years and an offer of renegotiation afterwards. This was seriously considered by the KNU leadership. However, the leadership found itself deeply divided between those who were more acceptable to the Junta's overtures and a number of hardliners whose trust in the regime had been eroded by previous failed peace attempts.<sup>14</sup>

The KNU had its first initial meeting with Burmese Peace representatives in Mae Sot on 8 October 2010 in Mae Sot, Thailand, a further meeting then took place in Mai Sai on 19 November 2011. Shortly afterwards they also had consultative meetings with the Pa-an based Karen Peace Committee and the Karen Baptist Convention to gauge their reaction to any future peace talks.<sup>15</sup> Further meetings were held on 29 November 2011 and on the 21 December 2011. According to KNU negotiator David Taw:

The meetings have great potential . . . In comparison with not having meetings, if we negotiate with each other it will reduce suspicions and it will create a friendly atmosphere. We're satisfied. We've become more familiar and frank.<sup>16</sup>

Consequently the KNU issued a position statement which noted that:

- On 12 January 2012, a 19-member delegation, led by General Mutu Say Poe and Padoh David Taw under the supervision of the KNU Committee for Emergence of Peace, will begin talks in Pa-an with representatives of the Burmese government.
- These talks are being initiated as preliminary discussions towards a ceasefire agreement, which would be a first step towards solving the longstanding political conflict between the ethnic nationalities and the Burmese government.
- The KNU believes that in order to achieve genuine peace and an end to the civil war in Burma, the underlying political conflict must be solved by political means, beginning with earnest dialogue.
- The KNU is committed to this process for the wellbeing of the Karen people and the people of all of Burma.<sup>17</sup>

Saw David Taw also noted that:

We don't want to give priority to development work. We want to give priority to rehabilitation. Our people have suffered a lot and their lives have been extremely miserable for more than 62 years, so their lives cannot be directly related with development works. First we want to start work that improves their lives, and then we can do development work that they [the Karen people] can accept.

The main meeting, which was attended by representatives of all KNU brigade areas except Brigades 1 and 5, on 12 January 2012 resulted in the KNU's 11-point proposal being put forward for consideration at the union level and the signing of a ceasefire.<sup>18</sup> The 11 points of KNU proposal calls for the government to:

1. Establish a nationwide ceasefire and immediately cease military operations in ethnic areas.
2. Guarantee the human rights and safety of all civilians.
3. Build trust among the people.
4. Support the basic needs of the people and ensure that development projects have the full participation and support of local villagers.
5. Allow national media outlets to participate in the peace processes, in order to provide accurate information about developments.
6. Immediately stop forced labor, arbitrary taxation and extortion of villagers.
7. Release all political prisoners and provide solutions to settle land rights issue.
8. Set out principles for all parties to ensure a genuine peace process.
9. Ensure the legitimacy of representatives involved in negotiations, provide adequate time for their consultation with respective constituencies and establish a clear role for third parties.
10. Initiate a plan for monitoring and ensuring the transparency of the peace process.
11. Establish a flexible process that guarantees progress towards sustainable peace, and in which all parties speak straightforwardly and avoid using words that may be misinterpreted.<sup>19</sup>

While many welcomed the signing of the agreement a number of KNU members have sent mixed signals. David Thackerbaw, KNU Vice-president, showed some concern in regards to the early announcement, stating that:

It is disingenuous of the Railway Minister, Aung Ming, to say so. He does not have the mandate to sign anything. He is overstepping his authority and at this stage is talking too much, only Burma's President Thein Sein can ratify a ceasefire agreement and for the KNU it is our Central Committee. . . It's easy to promise everything, I question why he is in such a hurry to get a ceasefire with the Karen. We are now entering the dry season and with a ceasefire in place, I imagine the Burma Army will be in hurry to resupply their 200 army camps in Karen State.<sup>20</sup>

He also stressed that:

I'm cautious, very cautious, there is no certainty, we're still not sure of the real agenda. We hear the President has good intentions towards moving the country to democracy, but the indicators we have say something different, especially the military offensive against Kachin civilians . . . The changes so far have been only cosmetic; they failed to deliver on their promise to release all political prisoners. By keeping political prisoners locked up, they are removing key political opponents who have for years struggled for democracy. There is no rule of law.<sup>21</sup>

The KNU Vice-President's announcement came a day before 651 prisoners were released. These included a number of high-profile political detainees and further strengthened the belief of many observers that the government was eager to implement reforms.

Scepticism regarding the Government's offer was also voiced by a number of exiled Karen with close ties to campaign groups. Nant Bwa Bwa Phan of the Burma Campaign UK, the European Karen Network and who also holds the position of KNU European Representative aired similar doubts noting that:

After more than 60 years of conflict, you would expect the hundreds of thousands of Karen people worldwide who were forced to flee their homeland to be very hopeful and excited about the talks, and perhaps even discussing returning. But that isn't the impression I get from the Karen people around the world I have spoken to. Instead, many people are very sceptical.



There are many reasons for this. First, we know from experience in the past 60 years that governments often talk peace while waging war. There have been five previous occasions when official ceasefire talks took place, and every time the government effectively just demanded surrender.

There have also been many occasions when the government have made unofficial approaches, although often these are more about trying to divide and rule, and split the KNU and the Karen people. So we know from experience we cannot trust them.<sup>22</sup>

Apparently the view of those inside Thailand's refugee camps is somewhat different to those Karen in exile.<sup>23</sup> According to a report in Karen News out of the nine people spoken to representing youth leaders, elders, and CBO worker, eight believed the government's moves were positive.<sup>24</sup>

In contrast to views expressed by Saw David Thackerbaw and members of the Karen Diaspora, Brig. Gen. Johnny, head of the KNU Brigade 7 and a negotiator with the Burmese government, also reacted positively stating that:

This time they didn't ask us to give up our arms, and they just want to work for equal rights for ethnic groups. This time we trust them.<sup>25</sup>

While many in the Karen National Union see the new peace initiatives as positive there is still some way to go in actually framing a substantial peace agreement and defining a political process that will address ethnic issues. As Saw Thamein Tun, a KNU Central Committee member clarifies:

. . . it's not exactly a formal ceasefire agreement yet but only an tentative one based on principles. We still have to discuss the division of territories and so on. . . The [Burmese army] has to work out whether to keep their troops in Pa-an or Kawkareik and they must tell us where their units are positioned . . . They must draw out regulations to prevent conflict in the future and direct their soldiers to follow these regulations. Also, we have to work out whom to appoint to sit in the liaison offices and when we are satisfied with the every condition, we will sign the formal agreement.<sup>26</sup>

While many have noted that previous agreements have failed, often portraying the reasons has the Burmese Military's machinations, there is also some way to go in building up trust within the Karen National Union itself. A number of Karen leaders have maintained a strong distrust of the Burmese and this has also caused problems in the past. As David Taw alludes to in his analysis of the 2005 negotiations:

Individual leaders' changing analyses of the situation play a decisive role: it should be noted that the viewpoints and membership of pro- or anti-ceasefire factions are not static . . . Perceptions of the trustworthiness of counterparts and intermediaries and the credibility of past engagements were other important factors. . . Membership of broader opposition groupings and alliances has played a role in the KNU's decision-making, reinforcing certain factions' power (especially because of overlapping leadership arrangements), and usually inveigling against engagement with the ruling regime.<sup>27</sup>

## THE FUTURE

The signing of preliminary agreements with three ethnic resistance movements offers unprecedented opportunities for exploring peace and strengthening ethnic inclusion in the political process. While a number of groups have still not made initial agreements with the Government it is likely that both the Karenni National Progress Party and the New Mon State Party will sign in the near future.



There is no doubt that obstacles to peace still remain - the continuing conflict in Kachin State and the Kachin Independence Organisation's insistence on achieving an autonomous Kachin homeland will see Burma Army offensives, and the inherent human rights abuses, continue. That said however, the prevailing climate of peace that is currently sweeping over a number of ethnic states is likely to see the Kachin isolated, and, should the other groups also make agreements, appear to be a belligerent.

While it is easy to err on the side of caution and refer to past mistakes and government behaviour in defining previous talks and their failures, such an attitude is highly unlikely to see any change in the future. It is necessary that the process be viewed cautiously, but at the same time such fears should not be allowed to prevent any future progress. The Burmese Government, has, thus far, made a concerted effort in reforming its attitude to the ethnic groups and while there is still far to go, achievements cannot be attained without taking those first initial steps

#### ADDENDUM

The Shan State Progress Party signed two peace agreements on 28 January according to media sources.

The New Mon State Party made an initial peace agreement with the Government on 1 February 2012.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> This paper focuses on those groups who have not previously signed ceasefire agreements with the government. The UWSA, the NDAA/ESS (Mongla), and the Klo Htoo Baw Battalion (DKBA Lah Pwe Group) have also signed agreements with the Thein Sein government.

<sup>2</sup> Email correspondence with Arakan political leader, 11 December 2009

<sup>3</sup> 'SSA Reps return from second pre-meeting', SHAN, 4 January 2012

<sup>4</sup> Email correspondence with SHAN, 9 December 2009

<sup>5</sup> 'Shan Army set to cast a wider net', SHAN, 8 June 2009

<sup>6</sup> The alliance was originally formed in 13 March 1999 and consisted of five original members. Although the Kachin National Organisation (KNO) joined later it does not have any armed units, it is also an associate member of the UNFC

<sup>7</sup> 'SSA South we still support the UNFC', 21 December 2011

<sup>8</sup> 'SSA South reaches ceasefire agreement with Naypyitaw', SHAN, 21 November 2011

<sup>9</sup> 'Initial Agreement Towards Peace', Unofficial Translation, SHAN, 7 December 2011

<sup>10</sup> 'Chin National Front's Statement on Ceasefire', CNF, 23 July 1998

<sup>11</sup> 'Ceasefire is not Surrender', Chinland Guardian, 14 January 2012

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> 'Text of the Unofficial Translation of the CNF Ceasefire Agreement', Chinland Guardian, 14 January 2012

<sup>14</sup> For a full analysis of the KNU's ceasefire agreements see 'A Gentleman's Agreement – The KNU's ceasefires 1949-2006', Paul L Keenan, Burma Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, 2012

<sup>15</sup> 'KNU Groups discuss peace process', Saw Khar Su Nyar, KIC, 13 December 2011

<sup>16</sup> 'KNU satisfied with third ceasefire meeting', Phanida, Mizzima, 21 December 2011

<sup>17</sup> 'Position Statement on Peace Talks Between the KNU and the Burmese Government', KNU, 11 January 2012

<sup>18</sup> The delegation was led by the following, many of whom are also central committee members: General Saw Mutu Saypo Commander-in-Chief Central, Padoh Saw David Taw, chief of judicial department, Brigadier General Johnny, Brigade No 7 Commander, Saw Thamein Tun, Central Committee member, Saw El Wa, Brigade No. 2, (Taungoo District Chairman), Saw Lay Law Taw, Brigade No. 3 (Nyaunglaybin District Chairman), Saw Kwe Htoo Win, Central Brigade No. 4, (Myeik-Dawei Distric Chairman), Saw Shwe Maung, Brigade No. 6 (Dooplaya District Chairman), Saw Aung Maw Aye, Brigade No. 7,(Pa-an District Chairman) Saw Roger Khin Chief of health department, Pado Saw Ah Toe Central committee member, Chief of forestry department.

<sup>19</sup> 'KNU Wants a Transparent Peace Process', KIC, 14 January 2012

<sup>20</sup> 'KNU leader denies ceasefire agreement is signed', Report by KIC, 12 January 2012

<sup>21</sup> 'KNU stand by ethnic alliance' Report by KIC, 12 January 2012

<sup>22</sup> 'For Real Peace in Karen State There Must Be a Political Solution', Nant Bwa Bwa Phan, 12 January 2012

<sup>23</sup> A number of grievances were aired even prior to full details of talks being released see also 'Karen exiled community calls for 'political talks'', Mizzima, 12 January 2012. Other calls, for instance international observers at the talks, suggest many in the community do not fully understand the complexity of the situation and the need not to delay the process any further, see 'Karen groups want independent third party observers at peace talks' KIC, 11 January 2012

<sup>24</sup> 'Karen People Say – Give Peace a Chance' Saw Blackstone, Karen News, 17 January 2012

<sup>25</sup> 'KNU-Gov't sign cease-fire agreement', Mizzima, 12 January 2012

<sup>26</sup> 'Carve up of Karen territory looms', Naw Noreen, DVB, 17 January 2012

<sup>27</sup> 'Choosing to engage: strategic considerations for the Karen National Union', David Taw, 2005