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Urgent appeal by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

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Urgent appeal for charges to be dropped against nine Ho Pong farmers unjustly arrested four months ago

The Shan Human Rights Foundation is calling urgently for charges to be dropped against nine farmers, including a 12-year-old boy, from Ho Pong, southern Shan State, who were unjustly arrested by the Burma Army between July 15 and August 4, 2017, on suspicion of links to a Shan armed group.

The eight adults are being detained in Ho Pong police station, but only six have started going to court in Ho Pong, where no-shows and lack of cooperation by the Burma Army plaintiffs have continuously delayed court proceedings.

The 12-year-old boy (caught in possession of a walkie-talkie) was detained for three weeks until his parents learned he was being kept in Ho Pong police station. He was released on August 5, but has been called to court over ten times.

The accused are facing financial difficulty to pay for lawyers' fees, food while in jail, and travel costs of their families to visit them from their villages – up to a day's journey away. Several are suffering from health problems, having been tortured when they were arrested.

The farmers were arrested during a military operation by hundreds of Burma Army troops in northern Ho Pong township after a clash on July 14 with the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), which is a signatory of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). The government troops rounded up and tortured villagers indiscriminately, accusing them of supporting the RCSS/SSA.

The nine farmers were arrested for possession of items such as walkie-talkies, mobile phones, hunting rifles and bullets, even though these items are used by local villagers for everyday purposes. The lack of evidence to convict the farmers appears to be why the Burma Army is reluctant to appear or answer questions in court.

Details of the court proceedings of the nine arrested villagers are as follows:

No.	Name	Age	Village where arrested	Burma Army Battalion(s) which made the arrest	Court process so far
1	Sai Win	12	Wan Kho Tawng	LIB 424	Has been called to court over ten times (with other accused farmers)
2	Lung Aw Na	40	Wan Nam Khok	IB 225, IB 249	No court hearing yet as Burma Army has not shown up

3	Sai Jing Da	28	Wan Nam Khok	IB 225, IB 249	No court hearing yet as Burma Army has not shown up
4	Sai Ko	37	Wan Nam Khok	IB 225, IB 249	1 court hearing but Burma Army refused to answer questions
5	Sai Hla Tun	24	Wan Kho Tawng	LIB 424	3 court hearings, but Burma Army did not show up for 2 hearings
6	Sai Jarm	29	Wan Khok Lao	LIB 424	1 court hearing but Burma Army avoided answering questions
7	Sai Panda	30	Wan Khok Lao	LIB 424	1 court hearing but Burma Army avoided answering questions
8	Lung Hsang Sai	47	Wan Kun Koong	IB 249	7 court hearings, but Burma Army did not show up for 4 hearings, and avoided questions in 2 hearings
9	Sai Khun	30	Wan Mark Lang	IB 249	4 court hearings, but Burma Army did not show up for 3 hearings, and avoided questions in 1 hearing

SHRF deplors the injustice of these arrests and court proceedings, and the prolonged suffering being inflicted on these farmers and their families.

SHRF therefore calls urgently for the unjust charges against these nine farmers to be dropped, and for them all to be released immediately and unconditionally.

Details of the arrests of these farmers can be seen in the following SHRF updates: ([Widespread arrests](#) | [Ongoing torture](#))

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