



# SHAN

## HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION

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### Update by the Shan Human Rights Foundation

November 28, 2023

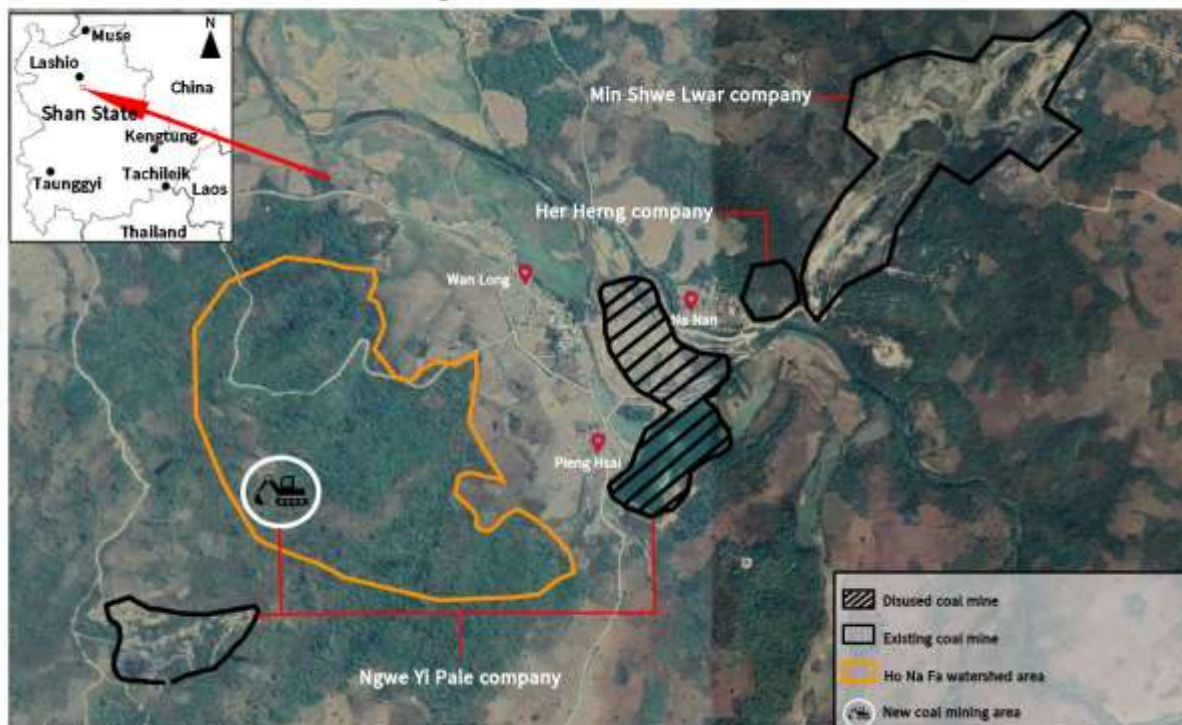
#### Ngwe Yi Pale starts controversial new coal mine in Nam Ma watershed amid conflict escalation in northern Shan State

Since early November, Mandalay Distribution & Mining, a subsidiary of the regime-linked conglomerate Ngwe Yi Pale, has started a new coal mine in the main watershed of Nam Ma tract, Hsipaw township, ignoring local opposition and escalating conflict in northern Shan State.

About 60 Burmese workers, using three backhoes, have begun digging in the forested Ho Na Fa watershed, which is a vital water source for the over 3,000 residents of Nam Ma, irrigating hundreds of acres of farmland.

The company began coal exploration in the [Ho Na Fa watershed](#) in November 2021, taking advantage of the military coup to overturn an existing agreement with local villagers to protect the watershed. On September 5 this year, company managers called a meeting of about 250 Nam Ma residents and informed them they had obtained a 5-year mining permit extension from the regime covering 2,796.75 acres in Nam Ma, and that mining would go ahead in the watershed whether the villagers agreed or not.

Location of Ngwe Yi Pale's new coal mine in Nam Ma watershed



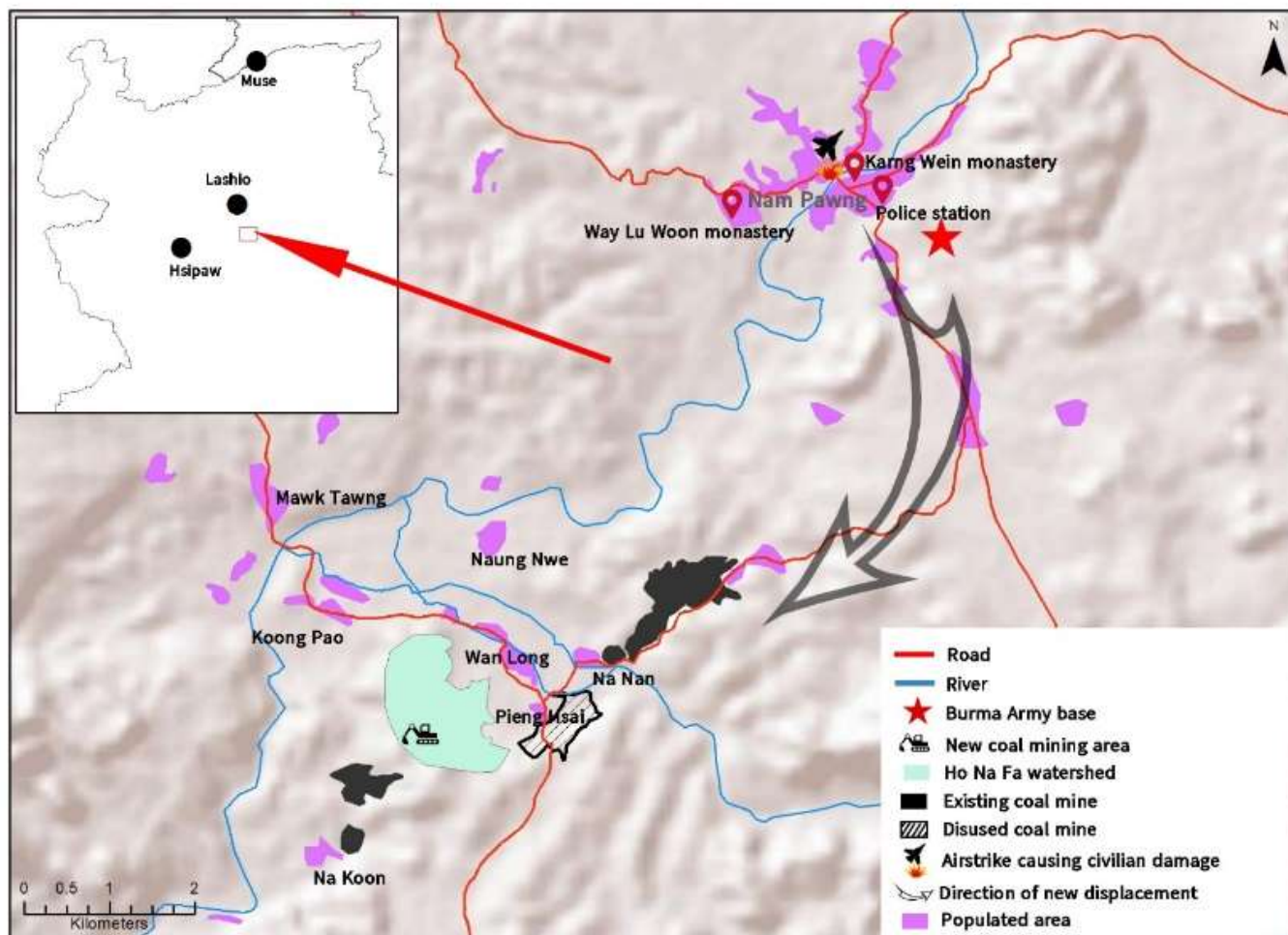
On September 15, company representatives informed Nam Ma elders that coal mining would start in the watershed at the end of October and handed over 25,000,000 kyat (approx. 8,000 USD) in cash for “damages”. Impacted farm owners received only 300,000 kyat (100 USD) each, and other villagers received 50,000 kyat each.

Locals now fear the total destruction of their precious watershed, as the company’s initial exploration has already impacted nearby farmlands. Digging and waste piles at test sites in the watershed have clogged water sources relied on by local farmers, and caused a drop in local paddy production.

The new coal mine is the fourth mining site opened by Ngwe Yi Pale in Nam Ma, [where the company started mining in 2004](#) in cooperation with the previous military regime. Local communities have repeatedly tried to stop the mining, due to numerous impacts, including air and water pollution, loss of farmlands and land collapse.

Since early this year, local villagers have been appealing to the Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA), which operates in the area, to help stop the mining. In October, local youth put up posters around Hsipaw township, calling for a stop to coal mining in Nam Ma and urging the public to boycott Ngwe Yi Pale products, including Crown Cement and Sinn Shwe Li sugar.

#### Displacement to Nam Ma from SAC airstrike in Nam Pawng, southern Lashio, on Oct 30, 2023



Ngwe Yi Pale has gone ahead with its new coal mine in spite of the launch of Operation 1027 by the Three Brotherhood Alliance on October 27, which has triggered large-scale fighting and displacement across northern Shan State, including Lashio township, which adjoins Hsipaw. On October 30, SAC fighter jets bombed Nam Pawng village, southern Lashio, causing over 400 residents to flee to Nam Ma, located about five miles south of Nam Pawng.

SHRF reiterates our calls to Ngwe Yi Pale to heed the wishes of local communities, and immediately stop its damaging mining operations not only in Nam Ma, but other parts of Shan State, including Ke See, where it is producing coal to fuel the Pinpet iron factory, feeding into the regime's weapons industry. We urge consumers throughout Burma to put pressure on Ngwe Yi Pale by joining the [boycott of all its products](#).

### 2023 timeline of community opposition to Ngwe Yi Pale's coal mining expansion in Nam Ma

March 2023	Over 100 local Nam Ma villagers, including farmers whose lands are near the Ho Na Fa watershed, held a meeting at Nam Ma temple to discuss how to oppose the coal mining in the Nam Ma area. They agreed to submit a letter to SSPP/SSA to help stop the mining, and went to meet with SSPP/SSA authorities and hand over the letter.
April 2023	Some Nam Ma farmers went to Wan Hai, the headquarters of SSPP/SSA, and met with an SSPP CEC member, expressing their concerns about the coal mining and Ngwe Yi Pale's refusal to heed their concerns. They requested the SSPP to help stop the coal mining. In reply, the SSPP CEC member said, "If you don't accept the coal mining, then don't agree to join any meetings with the company. Just tell them to pull out their mining equipment. If they do not comply with your request, please come to me again."
June 5, 2023	Ngwe Yi Pale company representatives met with local farmers in Nam Ma and tried to persuade them to let them start coal mining in the Ho Na Fa watershed.
Sept 4, 2023	The SSPP CEC member came to meet with Nam Ma villagers and said that he also opposed the coal mining in the Nam Ma area and told villagers to stand united and join hands with local CBOs/CSOs opposing the coal mining.
Sept 5, 2023	U Zaw Win (the Ngwe Yi Pale company manager), Sai Maung (the operations manager) and other company staff came to meet about 250 villagers from Wan Long village in Nam Ma. They said, "Even if local people disagree, our company has obtained a mining permit from the government, and we will go ahead with mining coal at Ho Na Fa". They showed the farmers a copy of an official 5-year mining permit extension, dated August 2023, from the regime's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, granted to Mandalay Distribution and Mining to mine for coal in an area of 2,796.75 acres in Nam Ma (extended from August 2020, when their former permit expired, until August 2025). However, the local farmers refused to agree to the mining. As a result, the company officials came to Nam Ma several more times over the next few weeks to meet with individual farmers to try and persuade them to agree to the mining.
Sept 15, 2023	Ngwe Yi Pale company representatives came to meet with local elders and informed them that coal mining would start at Ho Na Fa by the end of October. They also handed over 25,000,000 kyat in cash, saying this was to pay for any damages. The funds were then shared out, with impacted farm owners received 300,000 kyat each, and other villagers receiving 50,000 kyat each.
Oct 1, 2023	An officer from the Department of Water Resources came to meet with Nam Ma residents and told them that if the coal mining at Ho Na Fa impacted farming water sources, they would divert water to the farms from the Nam Kawng Kha stream (north

	<p>of Nam Ma). Local farmers rejected this offer, as there was very little water in the stream and it would have to be piped over a long distance.</p> <p>Also on October 1, a Shan youth group put up posters around Hsipaw township opposing the coal mining in Nam Ma and urging locals to boycott Ngwe Yi Pale products.</p>
October 2023	Nam Ma farmers wrote another letter to SSPP/SSA asking their help to stop Ngwe Yi Pale from coal mining in Nam Ma and from implementing their planned water diversion scheme.



*Mining permit extension granted to Mandalay Distribution and Mining, dated August 2023*



*Poster in Hsipaw calling for boycott of Ngwe Yi Pale, 1st October 2023*

#### **400 villagers flee to Nam Ma from SAC airstrike in Nam Pawng, southern Lashio township**

In the morning of October 29, 2023, troops of the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), a member of the Three Brotherhood Alliance, attacked a SAC police station in Nam Pawng village. In the afternoon, SAC troops based in Nam Pawng fought back against the MNDAA troops, causing about 1,000 residents to take shelter in Karng Weing monastery and Way Lu Woon monastery in Nam Pawng.

In the morning of October 30, SAC jet fighters dropped bombs on Nam Pawng, hitting and damaging one civilian house. Fearing further airstrikes and fighting in Nam Pawng, most of the village residents fled that day to other locations, including Lashio town and Nam Ma in Hsipaw township.

Over 400 IDPs from Nam Pawng fled to shelter in various locations in Nam Ma tract, as follows:

Locations in Nam Ma tract	No. of IDPs
Nam Ma monastery	57
Wan Long village	133
Pieng Hsai village	18
Nar Nan village	41
Naung Nwe village	110
Koong Bao village	45
Na Koon village	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>428</b>

The IDPs stayed in Nam Ma for one week until November 6, when they returned home to harvest their rice fields, despite fearing further fighting.

On November 21 and 22, a renewed attack by MNDAA in Nam Pawng led to indiscriminate artillery fire by SAC LIB 291 around the village, causing about 80 residents to flee again to Nam Ma to shelter with their relatives.



*IDPs fleeing to Namma temple*

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