



# SHAN

## HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION

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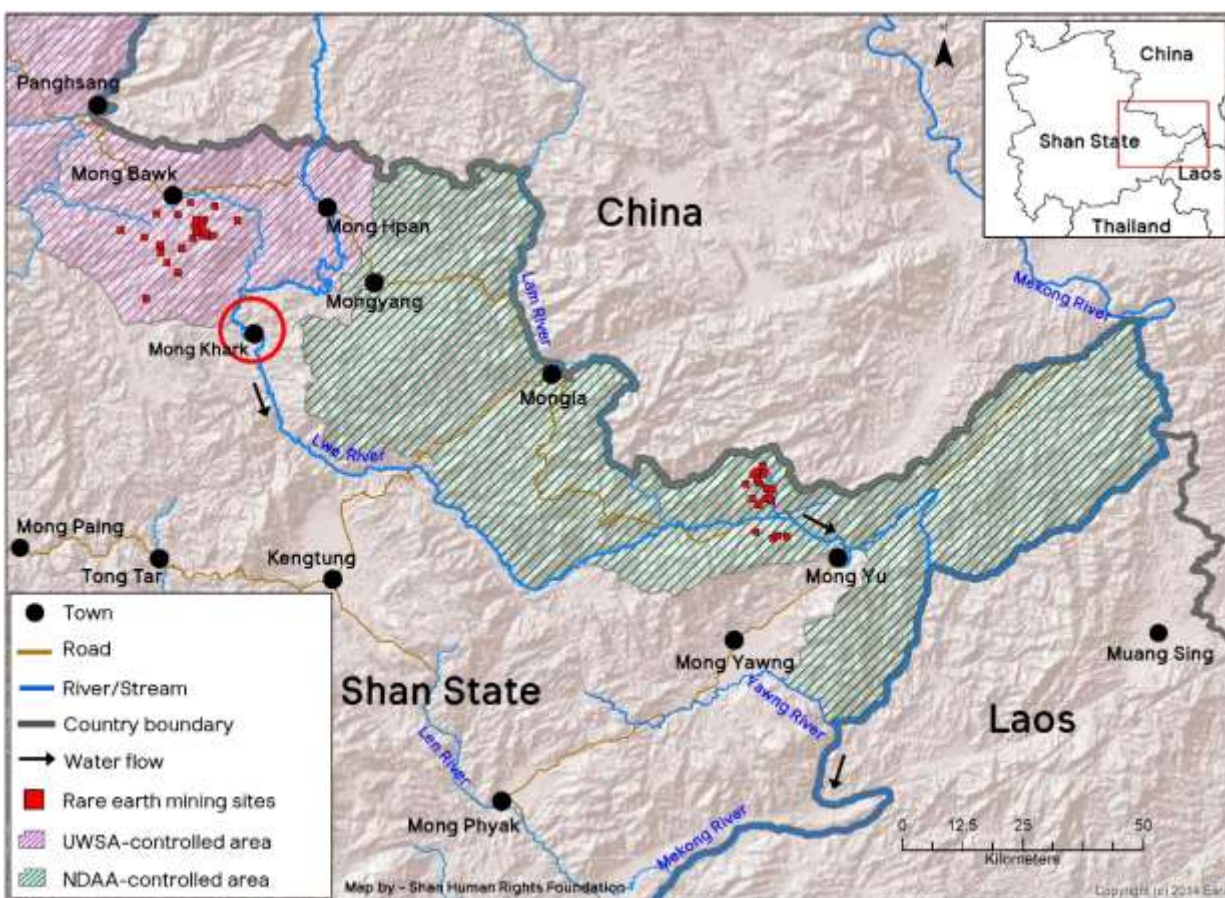
September 18, 2025

### Update: Mud-laden floods destroy farmlands in Mong Khark downstream of northern UWSA rare earth mines

Scores of acres of farmlands along the Lwe River in Mong Khark, eastern Shan State, have been destroyed by unprecedented mud-laden flooding since late July 2025, about 20 kilometers downstream of rare earth mines in the UWSA-controlled area of Mong Bawk.

Heavy rain first caused the Lwe River to burst its banks on July 27, covering fields on both sides of the river with water up to two meters deep. When the floodwaters receded after three days, 60-cm-deep mud was left on about half of the flooded fields, destroying local crops -- mostly rice, but also corn, peanut and soybean.

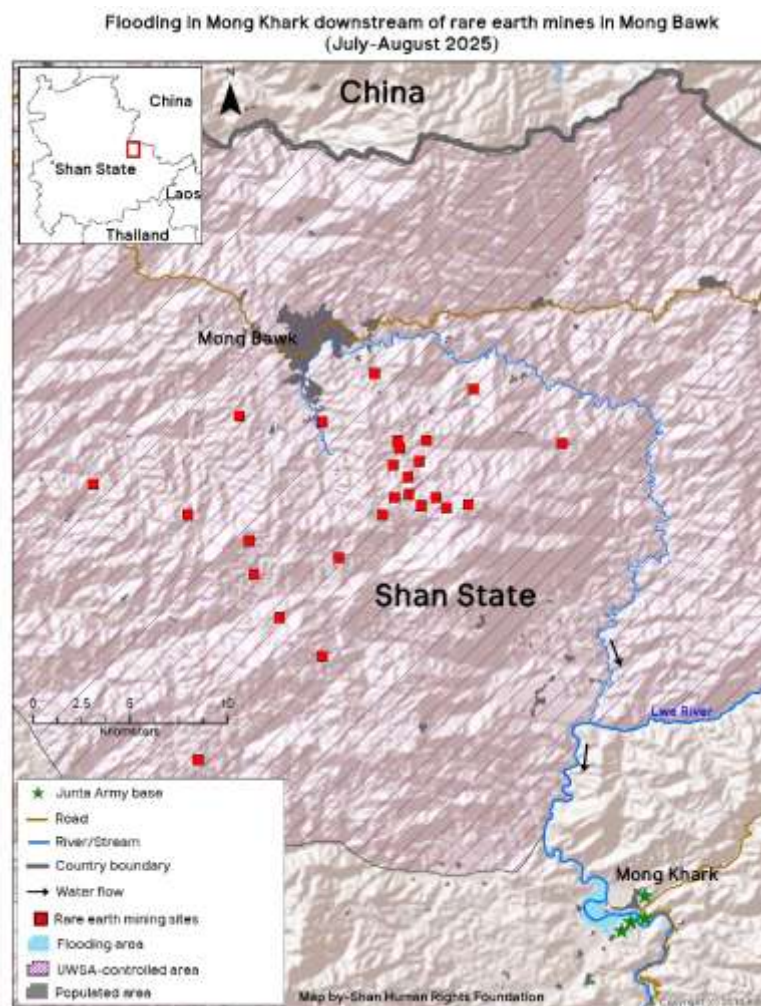
Location of Mong Khark in relation to rare earth mines along Lwe River in E. Shan State





*Flooding of Lwe River near Mong Khark town (July 28, 2025)*

Farmers replanted crops on the field areas which had not been covered in mud, but again on August 5, the Lwe River flooded, bringing new deposits of mud. The newly planted crops were again destroyed by the flooding, which lasted three days.





Farmers again tried to replant their crops, but there was fresh flooding of the Lwe River on August 10, again destroying the newly planted fields.



Locals say the damage caused this year by the mud deposits is unprecedented. Despite bad flooding of the Lwe River between July and October 2024, with up to two-meter-deep floodwaters in Mong Khark, crops were left undamaged as there was no mud residue.



*Mud residue in fields after Lwe River flooding (July 31, 2025)*

Given the recent expansion of [rare earth mines in the Mong Bawk area](#), which mostly drain into streams joining the Lwe River upstream of Mong Khark, it is assumed that the increased sediment load in the Lwe River was caused by these mines.

The rare earth mines in Mong Bawk use environmentally damaging in-situ leaching methods, which involve injection of chemicals into wide swaths of mountainside, causing large-scale deforestation and land collapse.

According to a [report by Wa News Land](#), a mine worker was killed in a landslide at a rare earth mine in Mong Bawk on August 9. His body was retrieved the day after the landslide.



*Stills from Wa News Land video on landslide at rare earth mine in Mong Bawk*

Most of the original residents of Mong Khark town are Shan, who rely on agriculture as their main livelihood.

Mong Khark township is under the control of the Burmese military regime. Next to the town is a junta Tactical Operations Command, as well as four battalions, IB 227, LIB 327, LIB 328 and an Artillery Battalion, all under the Triangle Regional Military Command.

After flowing through Mong Khark, the Lwe River flows between Kengtung and Mong La townships, then through areas of Mong Yawng township under control of the National Democratic Alliance Army (a.k.a Mong La group), before reaching the Mekong River at Sob Lwe.

Apart from the rare earth mines in Mong Bawk, there are a further nineteen rare earth mines in the NDAA area draining into the Lwe River.

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