

Burma

# Myanmar: Shan State Villagers Flee Fighting Between Rival Ethnic Armed Groups

Thursday 8 April 2021, by [The Irrawaddy](#) (Date first published: 6 April 2021).

**Over 1,000 locals in Namtu, northern Shan State have been displaced by fighting between the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA).**

The two Shan State-based ethnic armed groups have been fighting each other since March 29 over territorial disputes in Namtu.

"There was also shelling besides exchanges of gunfire. All the villagers have fled in panic. My family is now staying at the house of a relative. Over 20 houses in our village were burned down by the artillery fire. We are in serious trouble," said a resident of Panlong village.



*Local villagers flee from their houses due to the fighting between RCSS and TNLA.*

More than 1,000 residents from Panlong have fled to Mansan, Pan Thabyay, Yay O and Nar Koh Leng villages and are taking shelter in monasteries and the houses of their relatives, said Nan Kham Aye, an elected Lower House lawmaker of the Shan Nationalities League for Democracy party.

Nan Kham Aye won the seat representing Namtu in last year's November election, but was ousted along with the democratically-elected government led by the National League for Democracy when the military seized power in their Feb.1 coup.



*Houses were burnt down in the fighting between RCSS and TNLA.*

"I heard three of the houses hit by artillery were the homes of ethnic Shan villagers and the rest were the homes of Palaung (also known as Ta'ang) people," said Nan Kham Aye.

Local people, civil society organizations and political parties are providing relief supplies to the displaced villagers from Panlong, she said.

An artillery shell landed in the compound of a power station in Mansan Village earlier this week. It did not directly hit the power station, but damaged the house of an employee who lives in the compound. The power station supplies electricity to Mandalay, Lashio and Namtu, said Nan Kham Aye.



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Tensions remain high in Namtu. Around 100 villagers from Manli village in Chaungsa village tract have also fled following the increased military activity.

RCSS information office Major Kham San said: "The fighting has been going on for a week in Mansan, near Mongmu village tract and Panlong village. And there have also been clashes in Hsipaw."

The RCSS major said the attacks were launched by the TNLA together with the Shan State Army-North, the armed wing of the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP). The Irrawaddy was unable to obtain a comment from the TNLA.



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The TNLA information department on Monday said 15 houses in Panlong village were burned down by the RCSS's artillery fire.

The RCSS denied using artillery in the fighting. Major Kham San said the RCSS is only defending itself against the TNLA's attacks.

The two sides have been fighting each other since 2016 over territorial disputes in northern Shan State. The TNLA is based in northern Shan State and has not signed a truce with the government. The RCSS is based in southern Shan State, but is also active in southeastern and northern areas of Shan State.

The RCSS signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement with the then government of President U Thein Sein in October 2015. It then expanded its forces and reached Namhsan in the Palaung Self-Administered Zone one month later, resulting in clashes with the TNLA.



*Local villagers flee from their houses due to the fighting between RCSS and TNLA.*

The SSPP, which is based in northern Shan State, has accused the RCSS of trespassing on its territory and has joined the TNLA in military operations against the RCSS in Namtu.

Leaders of the TNLA and RCSS have held talks to resolve the territorial disputes, but no agreement could be reached as the TNLA demanded the RCSS withdraw all of its troops while the RCSS insisted on sharing the territories with the TNLA.

## **The Irrawaddy**

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