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Shan Women's Action Network

Press release

November 17, 2009

## **New guidebook reveals darker side of tourist sites in Shan State**

A guidebook launched today gives tourists an alternative view of Shan State by providing a pictorial exposé of the deliberate neglect, destruction and reinvention of local cultural and historical sites.

The majority of war-torn Shan State is off limits to tourists, but some areas are open to foreign travelers. *Forbidden Glimpses of Shan State*, compiled by the Shan Women's Action Network, gives a unique insight into these areas.

The guide depicts how Burma's military regime is erasing the last remaining palaces of the 34 former Shan principalities. This includes the demolition of the historic Kengtung Palace in 1991 to make way for a garish modern hotel.

The destruction of remnants of former Shan self-rule is contrasted with the regime's construction of new monuments that extol ancient Burmese kings and numerous replicas of the "Shwedagon" pagodas across Shan State. Photos of these lavish structures are juxtaposed with images of historic local Shan temples that have been desecrated and left derelict during the Burma Army's ongoing scorched earth campaigns.

"We have not only been robbed of our rights, lands and resources. The regime is also robbing us of our culture and history," said SWAN spokesperson Moan Kaein. "We want visitors to open their eyes to the repression going on around them, even in the cultural sites they are visiting,"

The brief guide also shows scenic areas off-limits to visitors which are threatened by the regime's development plans, and locations of Shan jails where prominent Burmese political prisoners are being incarcerated far from their homes.

The book has been launched to coincide with the Shan New Year, celebrated this year on November 17, 2009. English, Shan, Burmese and Thai versions of the book can be viewed on [www.shanwomen.org](http://www.shanwomen.org)

For further information, contact:

Charm Tong +66 81 603 6655

Moan Kaein +66 81 992 1121

Ying Harn Fah +66 85 707 3997