



Activists told RFA that some 1,000 acres (400 hectares) of land that used to be rice paddies had been confiscated by the company about 10 years ago, with half of it bulldozed and turned into fishing ponds.

Su Su Nway, an activist championing the cause of the farmers, called for "face-to-face" and "transparent discussion" among the farmers, local authorities and the company owner Myint Sein.

"We need to know that what Dr. Myint Sein could do for the farmers. The local authorities should mediate between the company owner and the farmers," she told RFA.

The company has reported to police that the the farmers had not only occupied its property but also damaged facilities and fishing in the ponds in the area, officials said.

The farmers, who claim the land has belonged to them for generations and that it was taken illegally without any compensation, refused to budge from the land until they receive "a guarantee from police that they will not arrest" those who took part in the protests, Su Su Nway said.

Ayeyarwady division Deputy Police Chief Tun Min told RFA that police had acted according to the law but added that there will be not be any further violent crackdown.

Police said they were forced to open fire on Tuesday after the farmers attacked them with sticks and knives.

Rights groups have expressed concern about a potential "land-grabbing epidemic" in the country emerging from decades of military rule.

Protests in northern Burma's Sagaing division over land that farmers said was being confiscated for a Chinese-backed copper mine in the Letpadaung mountains drew nationwide concern after a brutal police crackdown in November.

*Reported by Nay Rain Kyaw, Kyaw Zaw Win and Tun Myint for RFA's Burmese Service. Translated by Khet Mar. Written in English by Parameswaran Ponnudurai.*

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