

AMBER RESOURCES

FURTHER INFORMATION ON MYANMAR AMBER, MINING, HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, AND AMBER TRADE

On April 21st, 2020, SVP released a statement to members on amber containing fossil inclusions from Myanmar (“On Burmese amber and fossil repositories”) and [sent a letter](#) to the editors of scientific journals alerting them to the ethical issues surrounding fossils from Burmese amber. Here we provide additional information and draw attention to freely available resources about human rights violations and abuses in Myanmar, including those linked to the mining and trade of amber. Particularly we provide information from two international organizations on the conflict in Myanmar, and how we as a scientific community can make informed decisions on the future of trade in Myanmar amber fossil inclusions that provides uniform and unbiased assistance to local communities rather than fueling conflict. We recognize that some amber specimens may not be linked to illegal trade and human rights abuses, but the situation in Myanmar is so complex that scientists should be aware of how the amber trade has been used in internal conflicts and understand how our interest in vertebrate fossils may inadvertently play into those conflicts unless we can be scrupulous in documenting provenance and sourcing.

CONFLICT INFORMATION FROM TWO INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

A. UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (UN HRC)

Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (IIFMM)

In March 2017, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UN HRC) established a Fact-Finding Mission to establish the facts and circumstances of alleged human rights violations and abuses by the armed forces of Myanmar (the Tatmadaw). Multiple separate reports are available from the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (IIFMM) webpage. The IIFMM presented its full findings in an August 2018 report and later in a September 2019 report. The mission also released two further reports in August 2019 and September 2019, specifically targeted at Sexual Violence and Economic Interests of the Military (warning: documents accessed via the following links contain distressing information).

See: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/Index.aspx>

IIFMM’s March 2017 document to establish the facts and circumstances of alleged human rights violations and abuses by military and security forces in Myanmar:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/Index.aspx>

IIFMM’s brief (21 page) **August/September 2018 report:**

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/ReportoftheMyanmarFFM.aspx>

IIFMM’s full (444 page) **September 2018 report:**

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/A_HRC_39_CRP.2.pdf

Note: This document outlines the mandate, methodology and legal framework of the mission,

context, findings, conclusions and recommendations. The amber mining, trade, and human rights abuses are referenced a number of times in this document.

IIFMM's multiple **September 2019 reports** released in:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/ReportHRC42thSession.aspx>

IIFMM's **two specific August/September 2019 reports:**

1) On the economic interests of the Myanmar military (September 2019) including mention of amber a number of times:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/EconomicInterestsMyanmarMilitary.aspx>

2) On sexual and gender-based violence (August 2019) (again, mentions amber):

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/sexualviolence.aspx>

The mandate of the IIFMM ended in September 2019. At this point the IIFMM handed over its evidence to a body called the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), a new mechanism mandated by the Human Rights Council to collect and analyse evidence and prepare for criminal proceedings

(<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/IIMM/Pages/Index.aspx>).

B. GLOBAL WITNESS RESOURCES

Global Witness (<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/about-us/>) is an organisation specialising in human rights abuses driven by exploitation of natural resources and corruption. Global witness provides accessible resources on the situation in Myanmar, for example:

Webpage for Global Witness's Myanmar Country Campaign – *“Myanmar is so closely identified with natural resources such as jade, rubies and teak that its name is a brand in itself. But so far its people have not benefited”*: <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/myanmar/>.

The August 5, 2019 article entitled *Global Witness Welcomes Groundbreaking Un-Authorized Report Calling for International Sanctions Against Myanmar Military Businesses*:

<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/global-witness-welcomes-groundbreaking-un-authorized-report-calling-international-sanctions-against-myanmar-military-businesses/>

C. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Amnesty International (<http://www.amnesty.org>) also provide frequent reports on Human Rights issues in Myanmar.

TRADE IN MYANMAR GOODS AND SERVICES, GOING FORWARD, AND ADVICE FOR RESEARCHERS AND JOURNAL EDITORS SEEKING PROVENANCE OF SPECIMENS

The UN HRC reports and Global Witness briefings are consistent in their recommendations that investors, businesses, and consumers should avoid all dealings with enterprises associated with the Myanmar military. **The HRC provide information on such enterprises in the ‘Economic Interests of the Myanmar military (September 2019)’ report cited above.**

Both organisations also recommend that as the economic interests of the Myanmar military are disbanded active engagement with non-military entities to promote inclusive economic development in Myanmar is critical.

Recommendations by the United Nation Human Rights Council's IFFMM (see particularly pp 17–19: “To investors and businesses” that also include “To consumers”): https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFMMyanmar/20190916/A_HRC_42_CRP.6.pdf

Recommendations by Global Witness:

<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/myanmar/resetting-myanmar-policy/>

Both organisations emphasize that businesses operating in the purchase of natural resources should conduct heightened due diligence **to ensure their purchases are not associated with conflict nor are they at risk of complicity in human rights abuses or entering into a relationship with individuals or entities linked to human rights abuses.** The UN and Global Witness stress that businesses and individuals (including scientists) must apply **rigorous standards of due diligence to their supply chains, and supply chains must be clearly documented to ensure that products are not derived from the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw).**

The UN HRC recommends compliance with the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains of Minerals from Conflict-Affected and High-Risk Areas <https://www.oecd.org/corporate/mne/mining.htm> and/or the Chinese Due Diligence Guidelines for Responsible Mineral Supply Chains <http://mneguidelines.oecd.org/chinese-due-diligence-guidelines-for-responsible-mineral-supplychains.htm> and associated pdf https://www.globalwitness.org/documents/18138/201512_Chinese_Due_Diligence_Guidelines_f_or_Responsible_Mineral_Supply_Chains_-_En_K83fxzt.pdf .

We hope that this information is useful to provide further context and aid in decision making on the study of Burmese amber fossil inclusions from Myanmar. SVP is committed to monitoring the situation in Myanmar and encourages any other interested parties to do the same, particularly examining reports from international independent organisations and NGOs. Information concerning provenance, due diligence on supply chains and the ethical status of amber with fossil inclusions are essential before the guidelines and recommendations of the UN HRC can be met.