

**KCSN calls for Burma Army troop withdrawal, stopping of mega development projects, and adequate humanitarian aid for refugees to promote peace in Karenni State**

The Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN) has been closely monitoring the peace negotiation processes between the Burmese government and the ethnic revolutionary organizations.

On October 31, 2012, KCSN issued an analysis paper called “Six months after the cease-fire talks between the Burmese government and Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP),” and on December 5, 2014, issued another analysis paper “Where is genuine cease-fire and peace process.” These papers analyzed the ceasefire talks and peace process under President U Thein Sein’s government.

The cease-fire talks and peace process have been continuing between the ethnic revolutionary organizations and the National League for Democracy (NLD) which won the election in November, 2015. However, despite some agreements, until now there is no concrete guarantee of political progress on the cease-fire and peace in Karenni State.

One obstacle to trust-building is the continued presence of Burma Army troops in Karenni State. Even though Karenni State is very small, there are still 22 battalions of Burma Army troops operating there, and the No. 14 military training center has been carrying out ongoing training, including artillery practice, despite local opposition to the training centre, and concerns raised by the KNPP about this centre during the 2012 ceasefire negotiations.

In the KNPP’s 2012 union-level ceasefire agreement, it had been agreed that there must be consultation before implementation of mega projects in Karenni State, but the previous and current government have ignored this agreement and continued to push ahead with mega projects.

Under the previous government, surveying by Chinese engineers for the giant Ywathit dam on the Salween River in Karenni State continued after the ceasefire agreements with the KNPP. There was no consultation with local people, who are strongly opposed to the dam, and access to the dam site remained restricted.

After the NLD government came into power, the Shwe Taung Company conducted a survey to build the Upper Haw Khan dam on the Pawn river, in Bawlake Township, without consulting local villagers. The dam is one of a cascade of five dams planned on the Pawn river, a major tributary of the Salween, in a joint venture with a Singapore company. Therefore over 1,000 local villagers staged a demonstration against the plan on October, 2016.

Despite the lack of concrete agreement on the cease-fire and peace process, humanitarian aid is being cut to the over 12,000 refugees from Karenni State, staying in two refugee camps on the Thai border. Without a concrete agreement, these people will face many problems if they return home, because there has been no reduction of Burmese military troops, so there is no guarantee for safety, and also there is no agreement yet to guarantee the plan for their status, lands, livelihoods, and social welfare.

Therefore, the Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN), reiterates our calls to the Burmese government to start withdrawing Burma Army troops from Karenni State and close down the No.14 military training centre in order to build trust in the peace process. We also urge the Burmese government to stop the implementation of mega projects until there is federal reform ensuring that decision-making about such projects is devolved to a local level. Finally, we urge international donors to provide adequate humanitarian aid to refugees in Thailand until they can return home voluntarily, in safety and dignity.

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