



Seven Years of War, Violation of Human Rights, forced Displacement and Human Suffering in Kachin and Northern Shan States

Myanmar (June 9th 2018)

Ongoing armed conflict between the Myanmar government armed Forces (Tatmadaw) and the Ethnic Armed Organizations including Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) ¹ has displaced over 120,000 civilians to 167 camps across Kachin and northern Shan States. Today, on the 7th anniversary of the war, the JST continues to raise our deep worries and concerns in solidarity with those affected by the horror of war and call on all stakeholders to fully commit to the achievement of a just and durable peace; and firmly stand on the protection of dignity and rights of the internally displaced persons and conflict affected communities.

Humanitarian situation: Escalations of military operations and the use of airstrikes and heavy artillery in close proximity to IDP camps and populated areas have resulted in increased civilian casualties, Human Rights abuses, forced displacements and re-displacement and intensified fear and anxiety of civilian populations across Kachin and northern Shan States. The protracted armed conflict of 7 years has intensified the difficulties of ensuring respect for IDPs' life and meeting their basic needs, such as food and shelter. The spaces have become limited to accommodate the IDPs population that has dramatically increased during the seven years of displacement and the shelters need rebuilding or renovating in most of the IDPs camps. Moreover, the freshly arrived IDPs need urgent humanitarian assistance. Education remains woefully inadequate, from limited early childhood education to high school. Facing increasing and extended trauma, psychosocial support is increasingly urgent, but largely non-existent.

Humanitarian access: The Myanmar Government and the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw)' are blocking and preventing the delivery of independent humanitarian assistance, particularly food, breaching international humanitarian law and violate IDPs' rights. Moreover, strict restrictions of rice and fuel transport are causing food shortages and scarcity across Kachin State. Over the past months, humanitarian local actors have faced enormous difficulties in accessing newly displaced persons; and the international humanitarian community is completely blocked in terms of Humanitarian Access.

Premature return and concern over rights to land: As humanitarian needs increase and aid delivery faces increasing constraints, causing immense stress to IDPs living in camps, it is forcing them to make decisions to prematurely return to their homeland or accept inadequate resettlement offers, where their basic requirements are not met and their rights are not respected. The recent initiative taken by the Myanmar Government on the "*National Strategy for the closure of IDP camps in Myanmar*" is generating additional threats on forced resettlement with no guarantees of respecting IDP rights according to international laws and standards. On the other hand, IDPs are facing enormous challenges, as encroachment of banana plantation and massive land grabbing in their original villages is taking place particularly in Kachin State.

¹The armed conflict between the Government Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) and the Kachin Independence Organisation/Army (KIO/KIA) broke out again in early June 2011, after 17 years of ceasefire.

URGENT REQUESTS:

Considering these dire circumstances, the JST² makes the following urgent requests to all stakeholders:

- 1. STOP THE WAR NOW:** All attacks against civilians, and violations of Human Rights should be stopped immediately. People should be respected and regain their rights to make their own decisions and enjoy their life according to their priorities and free decisions. The International community should refrain from fueling the conflict and rather they must support effective peace initiatives for the benefit of the civilian population.
- 2. PROTECT IDPs' RIGHTS:** All IDPs Rights should be respected, the "*National Strategy for the closure of IDP camps in Myanmar*" promoted by the Government must stop immediately and should be replaced by an agreed National strategy for the respect of all rights of those affected by conflict or violence, and any return and resettlement strategy must be done according to International Humanitarian and Human Rights laws and related standards. In this regard all kind of land grabbing acts, that include banana plantation areas, must be stopped immediately in IDPs' homeland. All arbitrarily confiscated land must be returned to the original holders to ensure the realization of the restitution rights of displaced communities. It must be ensured that IDPs are entitled to restore their housing, land and property rights in their place of origin.
- 3. ENSURE HUMANITARIAN ACCESS:** Myanmar government and the Myanmar Armed Forces (Tatmadaw) must take full responsibility and accountability for the rights of all the citizens of the Union of Myanmar, including and especially IDPs, and strictly observe international humanitarian law that to ensure unimpeded access for organisations delivering humanitarian and development assistance.
- 4. INCREASE HUMANITARIAN AID:** All stakeholders and the international community must rapidly and effectively mobilise all available resources for the situation in Myanmar, specifically in Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Karen and Rakhine states. We urge all stakeholders to recognize and support the local humanitarian agencies' roles and contributions to the ongoing humanitarian response and future safe and dignified return and resettlement processes.

Finally, the Joint Strategy Team (JST) would like to express our gratitude to the individual, Myanmar public and CSOs, donors, UN agencies and international community that have given continuous support and concern over the Humanitarian situation in Kachin and Northern Shan States over the past seven years, and we count their continuous support until a just and durable peace arrives to all people in Myanmar.

Joint Strategy Team: 9th June 2018

Contact: Gum Sha Awng (Mr.) at gum.sha.awng@metta-myanmar.org Mobile: +95 95192913

Joint Strategy Team – Bridging Rural Integrated Development and Grassroot Empowerment (BRIDGE), Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC), Kachin Relief and Development Committee (KRDC), Kachin Women Association (KWA), Kachin Development Group (KDG), Karuna Mission Social Solidarity (KMSS), Metta Development Foundation (Metta), Nyein (Shalom) Foundation and WunpawngNinghtoi (WPN).

² JST is a group of committed, professional Humanitarian local NGOs providing comprehensive, strategic, principled humanitarian assistance to people affected by armed conflict in Kachin and Northern Shan States. JST has a long trajectory in strategizing and delivering principled humanitarian assistance in complex contexts and it is highly knowledgeable and exposed to the International Humanitarian System.