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Karenni Civil Society Network

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Global Karenni Communities' statement on the building of General Aung San's statue in Karenni State

Date: February 1, 2019

Karenni State is historically an independent State. According to the agreement signed in 1875 between Kinwun Mingyi, as a representative of the Burmese King, and Sir Douglas Forsyth, representing the British government, the Karenni States were recognized as separate and independent during British rule.

However, the Karenni State was included as part of Burma when the country gained independence. Based on General Aung San's promises of democracy, equality and self rule, the ethnic nationalities agreed to work together with Aung San's interim government to form the Union of Burma. At that time, Aung San made the following pledges: "We stand for full freedom of all the races in our country, including those so-called Karenni States" (Aung San, January 14, 1947 - The Times, London); "If the Burmese receive one Kyat, the Shan will also get one Kyat" (Aung San at Panglong, February, 1947).

Unfortunately, General Aung San was assassinated and Burma has been ruled by successive military governments, which have exercised unitary rule and ignored the promises of Aung San to the ethnic people. The failure of successive governments to recognize the ethnic people's rightful demands for democracy, equality and self rule, has led to armed struggles in the respective ethnic states. Many innocent people have lost their lives and the whole country has suffered from the ravages of civil war. Ethnic leaders continue to demand political dialogue towards the establishment of a genuine federal union in Burma.

As a result of the long struggle for democracy, the NLD government was formed after winning the election in 2015. Under the NLD government, the Kayah State government on February 2, 2018, began its plan to build a bronze statue of General Aung San, despite opposition from local Karenni youth. Youth who staged protests and demanded the fulfillment of General Aung San's promises instead of the statue have been facing lawsuits by the government until now.

On July 7, 2018, in front of local political parties, ethnic literature and culture groups, youth, ethnic armed organizations and media, the Kayah State Chief Minister U L Phaung Sho promised that he would not erect the statue of General Aung San without people's consent and would seek people's approval regarding this issue.

However, without people's consent and knowledge, at 2:30 pm on January 29, 2019, a work team of the Kayah State government secretly brought General Aung San's statue to Loikaw in Karenni State.

Karenni communities all over the world strongly condemn the Kayah State Chief Minister for breaking his promise and the Kayah State government for disrespecting the desires of local Karenni people and seeking to erect General Aung San's statue by such undemocratic means. We also urge the NLD government and State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to stop such undemocratic actions against the Karenni people which contradict their claimed commitment to establishing a federal union in Burma.

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- Karenni Evergreen (KEG)
- Karenni Student Union (KSU)
- Karenni Legal and Human Rights Center (KnLHRC)
- Karenni Social Welfare and Development Centre (KSWDC)
- Karenni Refugee Committee (KnRC)
- Karenni Health Department (KnHD)
- Karenni Literacy and Culture Development Committee (KLCDC)
- Karenni Education Department (KnED)

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Karenni-American Association (KnA)

New Zealand Karenni Society (NZKS)

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