



K P S N

Statement by Karen Peace Support Network

Karen Martyrs Day And Charges Against Organisers

9 September 2019

The Karen Peace Support Network calls upon the government of Myanmar to immediately drop charges against Naw Ohn Hla and two other organisers of a Karen Martyrs Day event in Yangon.

The charges against organisers of the event, under the Peaceful Assembly Act, highlight the ongoing lack of freedom of expression in our country. It highlights the failure to repeal repressive laws such as the Peaceful Assembly Act.

It is within the power of the government of Myanmar to drop the charges against the organisers of this event, and repeal repressive laws used to restrict freedom of expression, and we call upon the government to do so.

The banning of the use of the word Martyrs for the event highlights a problem relating to the lack of understanding and acceptance of authorities in Burma that Burma is a multi-ethnic multi-religious country, where different people have different traditions, histories and national days.

For the Karen, Martyrs Day, remembering the anniversary of the assassination of Saw Ba U Gyi, and remembering others who have fallen in our struggle for our rights, is just as important as Burmese Martyrs Day on 19th July is for ethnic Burmans.

The banning of the word Martyrs has caused much distress and anger among the Karen community, contributing to already high distrust over the way the peace process is being implemented. To then go further and charge three organisers of the event with a crime is a very negative step.

So many Karen families have lost loved ones in the decades of conflict as the Burmese Army sought to subdue us, control our land and take our natural resources. This is an issue very close to our hearts. It should not be underestimated how much this is undermining trust of the government and of the peace process.

A successful peace process will require an acceptance of all ethnic and religious groups in Burma as equal, with an equal right to celebrate days that are significant for them, and to be able to call those days by their correct name.

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