



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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**Minorities under Threat, Diversity in Danger:
Patterns of Systemic Discrimination in Southeast Myanmar**

The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) is pleased to announce the release of its latest report, “Minorities Under Threat, Diversity in Danger: Patterns of Systemic Discrimination in Southeast Myanmar.” The report investigates how discrimination against ethnic minorities threatens their identity and limits their meaningful participation within Myanmar Society. The Government of Myanmar and local administrators must take active measures to ensure that rights and identities of all ethnic people are protected.

Since 2015, the Government of Myanmar has enacted a series of laws that were meant to ensure that ethnic groups are respected in government programs and policies. However, these laws were based on the fundamentally flawed conception that Myanmar’s multitude of ethnic people could be categorized within the 135-government recognized *taingyintha* (indigenous races). This classification system is an oversimplification of Myanmar’s unique diversity and has served to sow division within communities and deny the rights of citizenship to millions of people whose ethnic identities were excluded from this list.

Without legal recognition, ethnic minorities are denied access to government documents, like the national ID card, necessary for the realization of basic human rights, including voting in elections, moving freely throughout the country, attaining education beyond the compulsory primary level, or owning and registering land titles. However, obtaining the national ID card has been a challenge for people across every ethnic group in Southeast Myanmar. Strict requirements for extensive family trees and official records have severely affected IDPs and refugees whose documents were lost while fleeing from conflict or individuals whose records are inconsistent as a result of the *Burmanisation* of the names of people and locations.

The report also explores ongoing patterns that threaten ethnic identity and expression in the public sphere. It includes the perspectives of teachers and villagers in order to understand why school curriculums must include equal respect for the languages, histories, and cultures of all ethnicities. Furthermore, this respect must extend to include recognition for the names, flags, heroes, and other symbols of ethnic identity in all areas of public life.

KHRG hopes that this report will help allow national and international stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the experiences and concerns of ethnic minorities in Southeastern Myanmar. It includes a number of comprehensive recommendations on how the Government of Myanmar and other actors can better respect and protect the rights and identities of ethnic minorities.

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