



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Human Rights Day

10 December 2020

Every year on December 10, people from around the world celebrate Human Rights Day. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, many have dedicated their time and energy in the hope of realizing the values defined in the Declaration and a vision of a world where everyone is ensured of their rights. The Karen Human Rights Group is grateful to be a part of this fight in claiming the rights for people in Southeast Myanmar.

Human rights include all things that a person and community need and deserve in order to live a happy and fulfilling life. These rights may seem simple, but achieving them requires that states and other actors embed rights into their laws, policies and actions. States have the duty to respect these rights, but also the obligation to work proactively towards achieving their realization. All people have the right to life and livelihood; to land, shelter, and food; they have the right to inclusive development and the right to a clean and safe environment; and, above all, everyone has the right to belong to and participate in the country that they call home. KHRG calls on the Government of Myanmar to respect, protect, and fulfill these rights.

The people in Southeast Myanmar continue to face severe human rights violations that affect them economically, physically and psychologically. These challenges have been compounded by this global COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has worsened the livelihood situations and deepened concerns over ongoing human rights threats. While the COVID-19 restrictions are meant to reduce the spread of the pandemic, they also restrict the livelihood possibilities of families. Rural families rely on seasonal farming that requires constant attention for a successful harvest or daily wages. In other parts of Myanmar where armed conflicts are still occurring, COVID-19 is a secondary concern that adds to the other constant threats in people's lives. The Tatmadaw is continuing their military offenses, military activities and attacks on civilians during the COVID-19 pandemic in conflict areas across Southeast Myanmar.

The COVID-19 pandemic is relevant to this year's Human Rights Day theme, which focuses on the need to build back better by ensuring human rights are central to recovery efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic adds to the suffering and struggle people in Southeast Myanmar already endure as a result of the human rights violations that they have experienced and witnessed. A special effort is thus needed to provide for their recovery. Basic rights, such as the right to life, must be guaranteed as efforts are made to progress towards the further recovery of their physical and mental wellbeing. The crippling impacts of COVID-19 must be addressed by both the Myanmar government and KNU government while ensuring that further violations of villagers' rights do not occur.

Ethnic minorities in Myanmar have endured conflicts for a long period of time where the right to life, freedom of movement, and physical security have been denied. KHRG urges the Myanmar government to ensure that Myanmar's COVID-19 Economic Relief Plan (CERP) is inclusive of all geographical locations and ethnic and religious groups in Myanmar. The plan must have the recovery of low income populations as its key priority. Aid organizations, donors, and government departments from both Myanmar and KNU must collaborate closely on COVID-19 relief efforts and ensure that no one is being left behind.

Media Contacts

Naw Htoo Htoo: +66 (0) 872 051 856

Saw Nanda Hsue: +95 (0) 977 675 3790