

Over a thousand villagers protest against Burma Army occupation and violation

Today, 6th January 2021, over a thousand people from 30 villages gathered at two location in Mae Wai Village tract in Dweh Loe Township, Mutraw District, Karen State, Burma from 9 am to 10 am to express their demands for the Burma Army to stop their attacks on local civilians.

The protest, led by the villagers from Lay Kaw Hti, Na Ko Hta, Mae Thoo Kee, Mae Thu and Mae Wai village tracts, expressed their suffering due to the actions of the Burma Army and called for the Karen National Union (KNU) leaders, Burma Government, and the international community including United Nations to take actions to help them fulfill their demands.

The villagers are protesting today for the following reasons:

- The number of Burma Army camps in their territory is excessive and some camps are even set up in the village.
- The Burma Army deployed their troops beyond the area permitted by KNU.
- The Burma Army consistently send in more troops.
- The Burma Army fires mortar into the villages and farmlands of the villagers.
- The Burma Army uses drones and patrols their territory.
- The Burma Army secretly send their soldiers to patrol and investigate in the villagers' areas which leads to more militarization.
- The Burma Army is constructing a road that passes through their territory.
- The Burma Army kills and loots the villagers with no reason.

For these reasons, many people live in fear and often have to flee their villages, their livelihoods have become more insecure, and schools have been forced to close. As a result of the Burma Army's actions freedom of movement is restricted, houses and properties have been destroyed, and some villagers suffer with health problems. The villagers, especially children, women and elders suffer a lot due to these situations.

During the protest, the villagers marched and voiced their demands:

- We don't want the Burma Army to build road in our territory.
- The Burma Army must stop firing mortar randomly into our homes and lands.
- The Burma Army must stop sending more troops into our area.
- The Burma Army must stop their operation to control our area.
- The Burma Army must withdraw their military camps from our area.
- We oppose the Burma Army of investing in our territory which leads to more militarization.
- We must have the right to move from place to place freely.
- We must have the right to do our livelihood activities easily and freely.
- Political problems should be resolved peacefully instead of the Burma Army occupying our area.

The villagers make these three main urgent demands:

- 1. 'KNU leaders should take action and help us stop the hardship and threats that we experience.'**
- 2. 'The hardships that we expressed above are the violations of our human rights. Therefore, we want the United Nation and international community to pressure the Burma Government and Burma Army to stop their activities as we described above in our territory.'**
- 3. 'As the Burma Government and KNU have signed Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement, we want both parties and the international community to take actions to resolve the concerns that we raised.'**