



The Karen Women's Organization Stands with Mu Traw District's Civilians Demanding Withdrawal of Burma Army Troops & Immediate End to Fighting

7 January 2021

The Karen Women's Organization (KWO) fully supports the calls of Karen villagers demanding the withdrawal of the Burma Army and an end to road construction projects in their areas. The Burma Army has long threatened their overall safety and security. KWO along with so many trying to live their lives in Burma is all too familiar with the brutality of the Burma military. The Army's intimidation tactics lead to violence and the erosion of basic human rights. KWO echoes these villager's demands for an end to road construction projects, an immediate withdrawal of Burma Army soldiers and a stop to the military drone patrols over their village communities.

On 30 December 2020, villagers protested for the third time against the military's increased presence in their Karen community in Luthaw Township. On 6 January 2021, over a thousand more villagers from 30 villages gathered at two locations to protest against the occupation of the Burma Army and violations of human rights. They voiced their demands, including an immediate halt to military investment in Karen territory and for political problems to be solved peacefully, rather than through an increased armed presence. Leaders from the Karen National Union (KNU) were called upon to take action, as was the United Nations and the international community to put much needed pressure on the Burma government and military to stop their activities.

The Burma Army's renewed attacks has displaced over 3000 civilians. Despite the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) between the Burma Army and KNU in 2015, the Burma Army has repeatedly violated the terms of the agreement without consequence. Their presence has continually increased, leading to more use of artillery shelling, skirmishes and indiscriminate firing, and spy-drones in civilian areas. This has been used to create terror among villagers, who despite those actions have spoken out once again asking for justice and peace. The Burma Army has shown time and time again that it has no concern for Karen civilians along with so many others across this country. It is time for the international community to accept that the Burma Army cannot act within international human rights standards and act to end this abuse.

As we all work together worldwide to control the COVID-19 pandemic, the National League for Democracy and Burma Army are focusing instead on attacking Karen people and other ethnic groups in the country. Karen people need to be able to seek safety in their homes. Instead they are forced to flee violence by the military making them ever more vulnerable to the virus. Peace agreements and negotiations have failed to bring stability to Karen communities. We need help to make these villagers safe.

The demands by protesters speak to their bravery in condemning those threatening their livelihoods. We are honored to stand with them.

Executive Committee Members
KWO Central