

Statement by the European Karen Network

Sunday 28 February 2021

Karen Civilians Repeat the Call on United Nations Secretary General to Help Stop Attacks and End Military Rule

Ten years ago on 28 February 2011, a petition of 84,000 ethnic Karen civilians called on the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to take effective action to immediately stop the Burmese military attacks in Karen areas. This petition was handed to the UN Secretary General, and other world leaders of 8 countries, including United Kingdom, Australia, Japan, Norway, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Canada. This petition was endorsed by 30 Karen organisations from 15 countries around the world and it was the first time a Karen petition was delivered to world leaders.

Karen civilians have been subjected to serious human rights violations including forced labour, looting, extortion, destruction of homes, villages, crops and fields, forced relocation, extrajudicial killing including women and children, beating, torture and the systematic rape of women and children by the Burmese Army.

10 years on, there still hasn't been any justice or accountability to hold the Burmese military to account for their crimes. The generals continue to enjoy impunity which encouraged them to step up attacks in other ethnic areas committing war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Kachin, Shan, Rohingya and Arakan. Currently, there are 5400 Karen civilians hiding in the jungle in Northern Karen State, following the renewed attacks by the Burmese Army since December 2020. It is the same army that is now staging a coup, ruling the whole country by force and cracking down on peaceful protesters in Burma.

"We are still asking for justice for our people. The Burmese Army has been committing war crimes and crimes against humanity against us for so long. We repeat our call on the UN Secretary General to come to Burma to pressure the Burmese regime to stop their military operations and human rights violations in Karen areas," said Nan Kyi Aye, Chair of the European Karen Network. "Antonio Guterres has recently condemned the Burmese military for using force against peaceful protesters in Burma. He should also condemn the Burmese Army for their continuous attacks against Karen and other ethnic groups."

We warned the international community that the ceasefire was only a pause button, not a stop button to the conflict. The voices of people from conflict zones were ignored by most peace fund donors and by the central government of Burma. Ethnic people continue to suffer as the Burmese Army never stop attacking us. That is why Karen villagers are now calling for the withdrawal of all Burmese army troops in our areas. Our people will only feel safe when there is a political settlement in place in the form of a federal democratic Burma that guarantees ethnic equality and human rights.

We also call on the UN Secretary General António Guterres to work with other world leaders to secure a global arms embargo and support the justice initiative to refer Burma to the International Criminal Court.

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