



**KNU – Karen National Union
Mutraw District
Kawthoolei**

**A Communique of Mutraw District/5th Brigade to the Public Regarding the Ongoing Use of Deadly Airstrikes
Against Karen Civilians by the Violent Burmese military**

March 30, 2021

We strongly condemn the repeated deadly airstrikes against Karen civilians that started in Day Bu Noh village on the night of March 27, 2021, resulting in three fatalities and eight people seriously wounded. Fear of further indiscriminate strikes has led to more than 10,000 traumatized people fleeing to try to find shelter in the forests or refuge in Thailand. The conduct of the Burmese military, which claims to protect the people and the country, is unjustifiable, and unacceptable. There is no legitimate reason to kill, harm and terrorize innocent people, including women, elders and children in the dead of night.

Despite the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), the Burmese military has been expanding its military presence in several Karen territories for months causing fear and displacement. They have been pushing ahead with their military road-building, sending in more troops, shelling into villages, and flying surveillance drones. There have been several killings of civilians by the Burma military, including the horrific murder of Naw Mu Nor who was shot in her own home in July 16th, 2020.

It has been several months since the KNLA issued a notification on December 1, 2020 that stated that unless the Burma Army committed to meaningful implementation of the NCA, the KNLA would be justified in defending its territories, administration and protecting its people. The consequences of failing to do so were clearly stated, including cutting off the Burma Army supply lines. Karen communities have held several protests demanding their right to live peacefully and called for Burma military troops to withdraw from their areas. Military offensives have nevertheless continued in civilian areas. In this context, the recent mystery of the delivery of rice to the Burmese military through Thailand was another deliberate maneuver to cause misunderstanding between the Karen and our good neighbor, Thailand.

In the weeks before the March 27th, nearby villages had been under continuous mortar shelling from the Burmese military outpost at Thee Mu Hta, forcing villagers to hide in fear. In order to stop the terrorising of villagers and to allow people to return safely to their communities, the KNLA was forced to overtake the Thee Mu Hta outpost. The Burmese military had failed to honor the NCA provisions and did not heed either the KNLA's notifications, or our people's demands for demilitarisation.

We have long foreseen a military offensive at the end of the dead-end NCA peace process. We informed our security forces to be on alert and prepared for what would happen on March 27th, the day the Burma military celebrated Armed Forces Day. Even though the Burmese military had a clear timeline of when they would launch airstrikes regardless of whether the outpost at Thee Mu Hta was retaken or not, they blamed the KNLA for violating NCA to justify its lethal airstrikes on Karen civilian areas. They claim that it is a reaction to our recent seizure of one of their more than 80 outposts in

our ancestral territory. This strategy is nothing new; it is part of their military maneuvering and it has been used against the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and the Arakan Army (AA). Now, thousands of Burma military ground troops are advancing into our territories from all fronts.

We are very concerned about the safety and security of our civilians. We have no other options left but to confront these serious threats posed by the illegitimate military junta's army in order to defend our territory, our Karen peoples, and their self-determination rights. We sincerely urge the international community, including the Royal Thai Government, to provide necessary humanitarian assistance and protection to our people fleeing the current onslaught of the Burmese military. We urge the international community to not give recognition to this illegitimate military junta and to cut all ties with them, including military and economic relationships. The international community should pressure the fascist Burma military to immediately stop the use of military weapons against civilians, which constitute crimes against humanity.

Executive Committee
KNU Mutraw District / KNLA Brigade 5

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