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**65 Years of Resistance and Political Leadership: A Commemoration on the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of KNPP**

Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) was formed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 1957, nine years after the beginning of Karenni National Resistance, prompted by the invasion of independent Karenni State by the Union of Burma government in 1948. The party was formed in Ka Thoe Kee village, Lerpwakho District of Karenni to provide political leadership for the resistance.

At its inception, KNPP was led by a 9-member Central Committee that included a chairman, a secretary, and 7 members as follow:

- |                         |                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Htaw Blo             | - Chairman         |
| 2. Samuel               | - Secretary        |
| 3. Mu Day (Biba Moo)    | - Member           |
| 4. Gay Hsoe (Law Oo)    | - Member           |
| 5. Thawthi Poe (Mee Ei) | - Member           |
| 6. Kyaw Naing           | - Member           |
| 7. Ta Eh Poe            | - Member           |
| 8. Htoe Kho             | - Member           |
| 9. Kah Poe              | - Alternate Member |

Just 4 months after its founding, KNPP saw its first crushing test when Chairman Htaw Blo was assassinated by his own bodyguard on September 28. After Htaw Blo's assassination, Saw Maw Raw was elected chairman in January 1958. However, after just two months of service, he defected to the Burmese government. His successor Chairman Mee Ei was killed in a battle in Kwah Kee village in March 1959. The Second National Congress in 1959 elected Kyaw Naing (Poe Kyaw) as the 4<sup>th</sup> chairman of the party. Unfortunately, he was captured by the Burmese government troops during a trip in 1960.

That turbulent period was the first 3 years of KNPP's shaky and tragic experience. Yet the party persevered. New generations of leadership emerged to take the

party to the next level of resistance and political leadership and build a resistance organization that worked shoulder to shoulder with its allies of ethnic resistance organizations and faced its enemies with solid principles and deadly force.

Yet more tests were to come. Perhaps the harshest of it all was the largest split within KNPP in 1978 caused by ideological differences among the party's leadership. The split rocked KNPP at its core and shook its foundation. However, it did not fall. The party reflected and rebuilt to become stronger. It has continued to lead Karenni resistance through political and military means towards the realization of Karenni people's self-determination and freedom from oppression and federal democracy for all in Burma. KNPP has also provided important administrative services in education, health, and defense sectors, to name a few, in areas where the Burmese military juntas have tried to destroy.

With unwavering principles in its armed struggle, KNPP was never shy to engage in peace talks. It had joined such talks in the 1960s, 1990s, and between 2012 to 2020 for bilateral and nationwide ceasefire, either collectively with allies or unilaterally. However, KNPP would not take any offer of superficial peace as a solution for the deep-rooted political problems in Burma. As such, the Karenni resistance continues.

The 2021 coup ironically granted a new and rare opportunity for KNPP to work with not only the Karenni people statewide but also with various ethnicities and groups across Burma to uproot the evil dictatorship once and for all. KNPP takes this opportunity very seriously by engaging all stakeholders domestically and internationally on all fronts including humanitarian, political, diplomatic, and military fronts. With the mandate granted by the 14<sup>th</sup> Congress of KNPP in 2022, the new leadership will continue the fight to uproot any form of dictatorship and built a federal democratic union together with the people. ■