



On International Women's Day, the Karenni Human Rights Group Calls for Recognition and Support of Women's Leadership

8 March 2024

For Immediate Release

On International Women's Day, the Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) calls for recognition of the sacrifices and contributions made by women in Karenni State and across Burma. The efforts of women-led civil society organizations and women human rights defenders in their various capacities as soldiers, combat medics, teachers, social workers, politicians and members of the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) must not be overlooked. In Karenni State, our achievements would not be possible without women's participation and leadership.

Women have established development programs and awareness-raising activities for decades, leading to a fundamental shift in how human rights are presented, shared, and acknowledged in local capacities. By educating villagers on their rights, women human rights defenders have adopted pathways for their communities to thrive. Women are fundamental in facilitating progressive change in Burma and are well-equipped to do so. The relationships and the trust they have fostered enable them to act swiftly and courageously.

Since the attempted coup, women have continued to spearhead change by challenging stereotypical gender norms that undermined the skills and capabilities of women. They have shown admirable adversity to the many challenges they have faced. They can adapt to shifting roles, even amidst a worsening humanitarian crisis where women and children are among the majority of those who are internally displaced. They have not lost their agency nor their commitment to seeing a future in Burma that is not only free from military rule but also free from the patriarchy.

The Karenni State Interim Executive Council (IEC) was formally founded in June 2023 to offer temporary services to its citizens, including those impacted by the conflict. Following the creation of the IEC, the "Women and Child Department" was

also founded to advance the rights of women and children living in Karenni State by establishing policies and offering necessary services. The department's establishment aims to further the advancement of women and children by improving their mental, emotional, and physical health and providing other essential support.

Thus, the department's primary responsibilities, which are currently being carried out, are empowering women and children, ensuring that budgets are gender-responsive, enhancing interdepartmental coordination to address GBV, and passing policies to defend the rights of women and children.

In its capacity as a government actor, the department is currently running its comprehensive services to the entire state, including women-focused humanitarian initiatives, office setup, GBV complaint handling, child-focused activities, the establishment of a center for women and children, maternity and childcare services, women leadership initiatives, and more.

The success of the IEC and affiliated institutions across Burma can only succeed with the equal participation of women who bring knowledge and years of experience. They must be supported, encouraged, and provided with the tools and resources to ensure the future of Burma is not only federal but feminist and free from all forms of oppression.

In line with the Security Council Resolution 2669, adopted in December 2022, on the situation in Burma, civilians have a right to protection, which the junta deliberately violates through daily airstrikes and indiscriminate firing. The conflict conditions have also worsened the rights and protection pathways available to women and children. Due to the high concentration of temporary shelters, internally displaced persons (IDPs) have faced challenges in accessing the basic needs for health care, clean water, and sanitation. Women, including children, are increasingly vulnerable to death from illness, injuries, sexual assault, and malnutrition.

Further, in line with Resolution 1325, which urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all peace and security efforts, the international community must fully integrate the gender perspective in responding to the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Burma. They must pay particular attention to the protection of the rights of women and children, prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, equal participation for women as

key stakeholders in decision-making processes and the rehabilitation needs of women and children.

Therefore, KnHRG calls upon international actors to fund women's programs, which give them the ability to respond quickly in crises and ensure the needs of conflict-affected populations promptly receive the assistance they need. Testimonies of violence experienced by women and girls must be taken seriously, and their cases must be effectively documented to ensure justice for survivors and their families at the international level.

No one is free in Burma until everyone is free. International actors are responsible for working with pro-democracy groups in Burma to show their commitment to supporting women's rights. This begins with ending all engagements with the terrorist regime and standing with the people on the right side of history. Their contributions must consistently be recognized not only on Women's Day but every day.

Media Contact

May Zin Latt, Director, Director, Karenni Human Rights Group

Email: karenni.hrg@gmail.com

Signal: +95 44931 0828

Ko Banya, Co-Founder, Karenni Human Rights Group

Email: banya7881@gmail.com

Signal: +95 9 254 150 436

The Karenni Human Rights Group is a community organization dedicated to reporting on the current situation on the ground in Karenni State and the human rights abuses committed by the junta.