

PRESS RELEASE

People-Led Karenni Governance Structure Pioneers Federal Nation-State Building for Myanmar
Recognize and provide direct support to Karenni State's bottom-up governance bodies

- Karenni State's revolutionary forces and peoples' resistance movement have set forth a groundbreaking approach to federal state-building in Myanmar by establishing the first ethnic state interim government system after the military junta's failed coup.
- In Karenni State, a coalition of resistance forces has liberated the majority of the state's territory and—together with civil society, political parties, and others—established the Karenni Interim Government in 2023, integrating ethnic resistance organizations (EROs) with newly formed bodies and active representation of women, ethnic minorities, and youth.
- For over one year, the Karenni Interim Government has been governing Karenni State through its executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and providing public services to local populations, including education, humanitarian aid, healthcare, livelihood support, law enforcement, and access to justice.
- The international community and donors must recognize and actively support Karenni State's bottom-up governance system, which can serve as a blueprint for other liberated areas in the country as Myanmar's people build inclusive federal democracy, peace, and sustainable governance—free from military tyranny.

It's high time for the world to formally recognize and unequivocally support Myanmar's people-led governance systems and their vital impact on building the future of Myanmar. The international community must end all engagements with the Myanmar military junta, and immediately recognize and engage with the Karenni Interim Government as the legitimate representative of the peoples of Karenni State.

Today, Karenni Civil Society Network, Karenni National Women's Organization, the Union of Karenni State Youth, Progressive Voice, and another organization who chooses not to disclose its name, announced the forthcoming publication of a new paper *"Federalism from the Ground Up: The Karenni Model of Nation-State Building"*.

The paper analyzes the pioneering example of the Karenni Interim Government as a people-led governance architecture established and developed in the face of the Myanmar military junta's intensifying terror campaign. This multi-level inclusive governance system can serve as a tested blueprint for the building of federal units, including political and administrative bodies, for Myanmar's federal democratic future. The paper also offers a set of recommendations for how the international community and donors can support Myanmar's emerging people-led governance systems.

Since the military junta's failed coup, across Myanmar, the people's democratic resistance movement and EROs have been reclaiming and liberating their territory from military tyranny, including in Karenni State. In parallel, bottom-up people's representative bodies, together with EROs' pre-existing administrations, are emerging as federal governance structures and delivering much-needed public services, including humanitarian aid, in spite of the junta's blatant attacks.

The Karenni Interim Government, established in 2023, is the result of multiple years of negotiations and dialogue, led by the Karenni State Consultative Council, between many revolutionary stakeholders in Karenni State. It is now governing the peoples of Karenni State through its executive, legislative, and

judicial branches, providing public services to local populations and shaping Karenni as a federal unit of Myanmar's future federal democracy.

The Karenni governance model ensures legitimacy, inclusivity, hybridity, and sustainability in its approach. It incorporates pre-existing structures of EROs with newly formed bodies, creating a hybrid system that strengthens the governing of local communities. The governance system also encourages and ensures public participation, as local representatives are elected through public consultations and diverse groups are regularly engaged to facilitate inclusive decision-making.

This people-led model is essential in the broader context of Myanmar's federal democratic aspirations, offering a real-world example of how a federal union is being built by the people from the ground up. The Karenni governance system is a domestically driven model tailored to Myanmar's specific political, socioeconomic, and historical context and challenges. The governance achievements of the Karenni peoples' resistance movement are a crucial step toward an inclusive, peaceful, and democratic future for Myanmar and set a practical example for building bottom-up, people-led governance across the country.

Ko Nee, Coordinator of Karenni Civil Society Network, said: "Every day, the peoples of Karenni State are continuing to endure the junta's countrywide terror campaign, including mass atrocity crimes and human rights violations. The groundbreaking architecture of the Karenni Interim Government demonstrates that our state-building is happening even in the face of extreme violence by the illegal military junta. Our model of people-led governance clearly shows the undeniable strength of our peoples' resistance and resilience in the nationwide response to the illegal junta's failed coup."

Maw Pray Myar, Chairperson of Karenni National Women's Organization, said: "For building inclusive federal democracy, it is paramount that women are genuinely and meaningfully included at all levels of decision-making. Over the last year, the Karenni Interim Government has taken important steps towards gender equality by requiring at least 30% women's participation across all positions. Going forward, efforts towards the genuine inclusion of all marginalized populations, including women, must be strengthened in Karenni State and across Myanmar to achieve inclusive federal democracy and sustainable peace."

Mu Elmarry, General Secretary of the Union of Karenni State Youth, said: "Today, the peoples of Karenni State are building inclusive federal democracy from the ground up, providing public services to local populations, and sowing the seeds of grassroots democracy that flourish with active public participation, including from the younger generations. From the drafting of the Karenni State Interim Arrangement onwards, youth have had a critical seat at the table to shape Karenni State's interim governance system, driving forward inclusive governance and youth-related policies."

Khin Ohmar, Founder and Chairperson of Progressive Voice, said: "The Karenni peoples' governance model is a thriving example of Myanmar's federal democratic future. The international community must stop engaging with the military junta, and instead recognize and support the bottom-up state-building efforts of the Karenni peoples in Karenni State and of communities across Myanmar. Financial, technical, and political support should be directed towards the Karenni Interim Government and other resistance forces' efforts in other parts of Myanmar to build an inclusive, peaceful, and democratic future for Myanmar."

The paper was produced based on extensive desk research and qualitative field research, including findings from 14 semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in Karenni State and along the Thailand-Karenni border between March and early May 2024.

The English version of the paper will be published online on 15 October 2024. The Myanmar version will be published online in late November 2024.

Download the executive summary of “*Federalism from the Ground Up: The Karenni Model of Nation-State Building*” [here](#).

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