



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Statement of World Refugee Day 2023

20th June 2023

On this World Refugee Day, the Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) calls on the international community to stand in solidarity with the people of Southeast Burma, and all throughout Burma, who have been forced to flee their homes, escaping the junta's inhumane and targeted attacks against civilians, and have been displaced internally in the country, hiding in the forests, as well as are seeking refuge and safety beyond its borders. We acknowledge the immense hardships and challenges they have been facing and the courage and resilience they demonstrate in the face of such adversity. We demand immediate action from international stakeholders and neighbouring countries to protect all civilians who are facing such brutality.

Since the February 2021 coup, political instability has resulted in the mass displacement of civilian populations in Karen State and other regions of the country. The State Administration Council (SAC) is responsible for perpetrating ongoing violence, persecution, and other various forms of human rights abuses, including indiscriminate shelling, air strikes, and burning of entire villages, that has plunged the country into chaos and created a pressing humanitarian crisis. Furthermore, the SAC continues to ignore the crucial humanitarian support needed by civilian populations who have been displaced from their local communities, while actively impeding and sabotaging the delivery of humanitarian support intended for displaced people and those in desperate need. This act is a clear violation of international humanitarian law, which emphasizes the obligation to protect and provide assistance to civilian populations affected by armed conflicts.

The deteriorating human rights situation in Karen State, along with other parts of the country, demands immediate attention and concrete action from the regional and international community. ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus, intended to resolve the political crisis in Burma, has proven ineffective.¹ Moreover, the failure of the international community to listen to local demands and the absence of effective action to put a stop to the junta's atrocities have exacerbated the human rights and humanitarian crisis in the country. As a matter of fact, a significant number of civilian populations continue to be internally displaced (and forced to relocate multiple times, while escaping constant SAC attacks) as they are prevented from seeking refuge across the border and receiving the protection and support they need.

Today we acknowledge and welcome, nevertheless, the initiatives taking place both at local and regional levels, including the establishment of local networks for aid delivery, all solidarity initiatives, and those actions from funding agencies and international organisations that actively

¹ Progressive Voice (+69 Myanmar organisations), "[Civil Society Position Paper Reviewing and Reframing the ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus](#)", May 2023.

listen to the needs of affected communities and provide support for displaced people in close collaboration with them. These initiatives are crucial in addressing the humanitarian crisis and promoting solidarity among affected communities.

Recommendations

On this World Refugee Day, KHRG urges international stakeholders and foreign governments to:

- Acknowledge that the SAC is the root cause of the current human rights and humanitarian crisis, as well as the reason for massive displacement in the country.
- Refrain from giving any legitimacy to the junta, including by signing agreements with them and collaborating with them.
- Support current investigations and proceedings to prosecute junta leaders and seek out all additional opportunities to hold the Burma military accountable for its vast array of crimes.
- Ensure that the SAC is unable to hold decision-making power over the distribution of aid, and that funds are not indirectly being rerouted through the SAC. This also entails abstaining from providing humanitarian assistance through ASEAN's AHA Center.
- Urge neighbouring countries to ensure that their authorities do not deny entry to people crossing the border seeking refuge, and encourage them to work with cross-border organisations to develop support and protection services for those seeking refuge.
- Urge neighbouring countries to allow the passage of aid into Burma through cross-border aid organisations and local civil society organisations (CSOs) already operating in the area.
- Diversify funding distribution so that more funding is made directly available to non-state actors, particularly local ethnic service providers and CSOs, regardless of their registration status.
- Consult and include local actors and communities in decision-making regarding humanitarian response and the resolution of the crisis.

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