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# Australian Karen Organisation

ABN 43 759 263 249

Incorporated in Victoria

27 January 2021

## Statement in Response to the Burma Army Artillery Attacks in Northern Karen State

The Australian Karen Organisation (AKO) condemns the escalating of artillery attacks by the Burma Army in the Mutraw (Papun) and Kler Lwe Htoo (Nyaunglebin) Districts of Northern Karen State, which have displaced over 7,500 villagers and killed innocent Karen civilians from the period of early December 2020 to 12 January 2021. The International Community, including the United Nations Security Council, has a responsibility to uphold international law and are failing in their responsibilities.

The Union Aid Abroad APHEDA is seriously concerned by the recent reports of armed attacks on civilians in Northern Karen State and the resulting displacement. APHEDA condemns the ongoing human rights violations against ethnic minority groups in Myanmar and stand with their partner organisations and Karen civilians who are urging the International Community and United Nations on the Myanmar Government and Military to end the attacks.

Naw Wah Ku Shee, the Director of Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) has said that the Burma Army should immediately end these attacks and pull back troops from these areas so villagers can return home. International donors to the “peace process” including the Joint Peace Fund, should suspend funding for the process until the Burma Army stops violating the terms of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

According to local eye witness, on 12 January 2021 the Burma Army began artillery attacks in the Mutraw (Papun) and Kler Lwe Htoo (Nyaunglebin) Districts of Northern Karen State and have displaced over 3,700 villagers, and killed a village chief.

Since early December 2020, five Burma Army battalions have been firing shells around their bases in the Luthaw and Dweh Lo Townships of Mutraw (Territory of KNU Brigade 5), causing 3,176 villagers from 12 villages to flee and hide in the surrounding jungle. Many of these villagers were similarly displaced last year by the Burma Army shelling during a fierce offensive to push through a strategic road into Northern Mutraw, Karen State.

On 11 January 2021 Burma Army IB 57 began shelling around the village of Ta Kaw Der, in the Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwe Htoo (Territory of KNU Brigade 3), west of Mutraw, displacing a further 588 villagers and causing the closure of community schools in the area. This was reported to be the first displacement in this area since the start of the peace process in 2012.

Despite the efforts of the International Community to endorse genuine peace, the Burmese Military have increased their attacks on various ethnic groups, including the Kachin, Rakhine and Shan States, failing to uphold the ceasefire principles in the Karen State in particular.

We believe that Burma in its state of humanitarian crisis, ought be summoned by the United Nations Security Council to the International Criminal Court.

The Burmese Military's callous breach of the Nation-wide Ceasefire Agreement, including the moving of troops into agreed ceasefire boundary, is to be condemned.

As the armed conflict continues between the Burma Army and the independent ethnic groups, such as the Karen National Liberation Front (KNLA) much needed humanitarian aid organisations are experiencing difficulty in accessing the conflict zones, and thus the internally displaced people, further denying them of basic rights to food, shelter, and healthcare.

The civilians and displaced persons of the ethnic States of Burma have the right to return to their homes in safety and with dignity. This however cannot occur until genuine peace is achieved throughout Burma and the malicious military offensives within ethnic territories, such as the Mutraw District, Northern Karen State as recent within three weeks of Burmese Military attacks, have ceased.

We call on the United Nations to advance with their Appointment of the Special Envoy to Burma, and the immediate dispatch of the Envoy to ethnic areas to negotiate free movement and humanitarian access.

We call on the United Nations and International Governments to advocate the bringing of genuine peace and national reconciliation, through political interventions on the current peace-building between the Burmese Government and the ethnic people of Burma.

We urge the NLD Government to direct the Burmese Military to end all brutal attacks on the ethnic States immediately which have resulted in the impediment of the provision of humanitarian assistance for over 100,000 internally displaced people.

*Central Executive Committee  
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