



June 9, 2015

Statement by KWAT on the 4th anniversary of the renewal of war in Kachin areas

The international community must start pressuring the Burmese government to stop its attacks against ethnic peoples

The conflict situation in northern Burma has worsened during 2015. Despite the Burmese government's claims to be promoting peace, they have continued their military build-up in Kachin and northern Shan State, launching large-scale offensives, including aerial bombings, which are devastating ethnic communities.

Even as an ethnic armed group summit was being held in Pangsang in the first week of May to discuss the nationwide ceasefire agreement, the Burma Army was launching attacks on ethnic forces, including the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). On May 6, troops from Battalions 86, 15 and 142 attacked the KIA in Mansi township, and on May 7, Burmese jets bombed the villages of Namlimpa and Magyeng, causing the local villagers to flee in terror. On May 20, aerial bombing damaged two houses in Magyeng village, Minsi Twonship.

Since February 2015, an estimated 100,000 people have been displaced from the Kokang area, adding to over 120,000 already displaced in Kachin areas since 2011. Despite the ongoing conflict, international donors are cutting aid to Kachin IDPs, many of whom are now facing shortages of food and medicine.

IDPs still dare not return home due to ongoing human rights abuses committed by Burmese government troops, including sexual violence, murder and torture. KWAT has already documented the rape of over 70 women and girls by Burmese troops since the war restarted in 2011. In spite of our repeated calls for justice, impunity is continuing for these crimes.

Despite strong evidence that Burmese troops of LIB 503 were guilty of the rape and murder of two Kachin volunteer teachers in Muse District on the night of January 19, 2015, the police have wound up their investigations without charging any suspects. The military authorities not only obstructed investigations into the case, but threatened legal action against anyone alleging their troops were to blame.

On March 21, 2015, Burmese troops of LIB 317 and 415 murdered and robbed a 103-year-old woman and her son, who were fleeing attacks on their village in Mansi, but no one has been charged for this crime. On April 13, 2015, a private from LIR 438 attempted to rape a bed-ridden 73-year-old woman in Bhamo. He has been arrested, but the local community has no confidence that he will receive a just sentence from a military court.

Despite the ongoing attacks and abuses, the international community is putting no pressure on the Burmese government to show sincerity towards the peace process. On the contrary, the unconditional investment and aid now being showered on the government is emboldening them in their hypocrisy – Burma’s Commander in Chief Gen. Min Aung Hlaing even announced recently that “the military is not attacking ethnic people.”

We are very concerned that foreign aid and investment is serving to subsidize the government’s war machine. The New Light of Myanmar recently reported the government had spent a staggering USD 1.5 billion on their war on the Kokang this year.

We therefore urge the international community to start pressuring the Burmese government to make good on its promises to build peace.

- We call for diplomatic pressure on the Burmese government to immediately end all offensives and withdraw their troops from the ethnic conflict areas, and to begin political dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict and establish genuine federalism.
- We also call for foreign donors and investors to ensure that their funds are not empowering the Burmese government’s military infrastructure, and for humanitarian donors to provide direct and adequate aid to communities suffering from the ongoing conflict.

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Kachin Women’s Association Thailand (KWAT) is a non profit-making organisation working on behalf of Kachin women. We have a vision of a Kachin State where all forms of discrimination are eliminated; where all women are empowered to participate in decision making at a local, national and international level; and where all Kachin children have the opportunity to fulfill their potential. www.kachinwomen.com