

Letter of Felicitation by KNU President Gen. Mutu Say Poe on 65th Anniversary of Karen National Day

February 11, 2013

Dear All the Karen Nationals,

Today is the 65th Anniversary of Karen National Day, and it is an auspicious day which we all the Karen nationals should respect and honor. On this auspicious day, I would like to wish the entire Karen people to be happy, healthy and brimful with various kinds of splendor.

Dear All the Karen Nationals,

We, the Karen people, are a free people with all kinds of splendor and have all the characteristics of a nation. We want to raise the standard of social life of our people with freedom, without fear, without anxiety and according to our own aspirations. However, other nationalities with different mindsets have tried to eliminate our national identities and roots. They have used armed violence, deceits and various kinds of stratagems. For leading a peaceful life, the Karen people had moved away from one place to another and, eventually, in order to safeguard the national identities, the Karen people had avoided living among other nationalities. As a result, they had developed mistrust and a feeling of bitterness toward the nationalities which had mistreated them. After gaining education and knowledge from peoples of the western countries, the Karens had come to learn more that they would not be able to escape from persecution by moving away. From that time on, they had developed the conviction that they themselves had to struggle in order to overcome the difficulties, gain freedom and gain their legitimate rights. Gradually, unity and cooperation of the Karen people had increased, over time, in their movement for emancipation, development and leading a peaceful life. The Karens started also to form organizations.

Dear All the Karen Nationals,

In order to strengthen the Karen people's movement, the Karen National Union (KNU) was formed in 1947. After the formation of the KNU, the participation and movement of the Karen people increased in momentum. In 1948, on the 11th of February, over 400,000 Karens in various towns and cities demonstrated peacefully with the four demands shown below.

- (1) Give Karen State At Once; (Freedom and self-determination)
- (2) Show Equality between Karen and Burman At Once; (National equality & democratic rights)
- (3) We Don't Want Civil War; (Desire for peace)
- (4) We Don't Want Racial Strife; (Desire for mutual respect and recognition)

The demonstration was the showing of Karen people's unity for the first time and it also showed the aspirations of the Karen people. The KNU Congress held from November 23 to 25 in 1953 decided to designate the day as the Karen National Day. It was the day when the Karen people demonstrated their love for unity, freedom, equality and peace. The Karen people's aspirations and attitude shown on that day are still in the hearts of the Karen people, up to this day. Starting from 1947, the Karen people had used various means to realize their demands and eventually, they reached the state of armed resistance.

Dear All the Karen Nationals,

We, the Karen people, could not have achieved their aim to live in freedom as a people and develop in accordance with their desire by armed resistance alone. Our Karen people have protected and elevated their national dignity and identities in areas they are able to do so in the regions they live. However, in doing so, they are not able to perform fully with correct relationship, reciprocal understanding and cooperation. As our effort was localized in the region we live, appropriate benefit was not obtained. In consequence of changes to the political situation, the KNU reviewed the various situations of politically led armed resistance movement, and accepted ceasefire with the government's Tatmadaw (armed forces), in principle. Regarding this development, differences of view within the KNU has engendered weaknesses and caused concern among the Karen people. Ceasefire with the government's armed forces does not mean cessation of the Karen people's movement. After the review and analysis of our past experiences and the situations of the KNU, the Karen people, the Burmese politics and international politics, it is the choosing of way most appropriate for our resistance movement and our endeavor to reach our national political goal. This choice is to elevate the political movement. This political movement needs the combination of procedural and

knowledge-based skills and has to be performed wisely and with caution. Though this way of struggle does not entail death, failure to perform it correctly could negatively affect the entire Karen people. At the same time, we have to arm ourselves with procedural and knowledge-based skills and activities that will support this political work.

Dear All the Karen Nationals,

We the Karen people must write our own history. The Karen people have to write it with activities in consonant with the situation. It cannot be done with words of mouth and day dreaming. The writing must be based on the true situation of the Karen people. The Karen people must evidently demonstrate their true nature of having love for freedom, peace, equality and unity. The showing of our Karen people's principal attitude and mind-set daily means writing the true history of the Karen people. We the Karens are not a people who have the spirit to surrender under persecution. As there has never been surrender in the movement, there has never been defeat. However, we the Karen people do not have the spirit to pluck victory on the condition they are in and it is vitally necessary for them to develop the spirit to achieve victory by fighting for truth and justice.

Dear All the Karen Nationals,

In closing and on this National Day anniversary, I would like to demand earnestly from you, the Karen people, from now on to safeguard our true Karen identities and honor, stand and live as a people who desire self-determination, and who love freedom, peace and unity just as the Karen in the old days had demonstrated their desire on February 11, 1948. If we maintain the identities of our people firmly and uphold the basic political principles and promote them with unity, we will definitely achieve the political goal yearned for by all the Karen people.