

New Attacks on Karen Require International Response

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The Karen National Union (KNU) calls upon the international community to demand an immediate end to a new major military offensive against innocent Karen civilians.

Even though Senior General Than Shwe continues making promises to hold free and fair elections, his soldiers are attacking Karen villages, looting and burning them to the ground, arresting and killing innocent Karen civilians, raping women and children and use them as slave labour.

Currently, major new attacks are taking place in Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglaybin) and Mutraw (Papun) Districts in Kathoolei (Karen State). On February 7, 2010, the troops of the Burmese Army entered two Karen villages in Ler Doh (Kyaukkyi) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District and burned them down. As a consequence, seventy-four houses were destroyed. People in eleven villages have been forced to flee for their lives. Around 2,500 people are now hiding in the jungle, in desperate need of aid.

We, the KNU, call upon the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to firmly demand that the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) immediately cease its attacks on innocent civilians, which are against international law. Simultaneously, we, the KNU, call upon the UNSC to take necessary measures to ensure that aid reaches those displaced by the attacks.

We, the KNU, also call upon the international community to pay attention to what is really happening on the ground in Burma rather than focus on the sham elections scheduled to be held later this year. A dictatorship genuinely committed to a transition to democracy does not send its troops to attack innocent civilians, to burn down their homes, to torture and execute them. The international community should judge the generals by their actions, not their words which have proved to be false time and again.

The international community must not follow the agenda of the dictatorship, which is only interested in solidifying its grip on power. The only thing the 2008 constitution and sham elections guarantee is that they will prolong the longstanding political problems of Burma.

The United Nations has repeatedly stated that tri-partite dialogue should take place among the SPDC, the National League for Democracy (NLD) and genuine ethnic representatives. And as thousands of civilians flee new military attacks, there should not be excuses for further delay. In point of fact, it is high time that the UNSC took necessary measures to enforce its 2007 demand that the SPDC immediately enter into tri-partite dialogue with all those concerned.

The KNU is a democratic organisation, working for peace and human rights, the restoration of democracy, and the establishment of a federal union in Burma. Unlike the SPDC, we, the KNU, are keen to comply with the UN calls for dialogue. We are ready to enter into genuine tri-partite dialogue at any time.