

KNU Statement Requesting UN SG to Call on SPDC to Stop Attacks against Karen Civilians

04 Mar 2010

While we, the Karen National Union (KNU), welcome UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's expression of concern regarding new attacks on the Karen people, we do not believe that this alone is an adequate response to the current crisis.

We would like to remind the Secretary General that these attacks have been taking place for more than 60 years, and that numerous requests and expressions of concern, and even resolutions from the United Nations General Assembly, and a Presidential Statement from the United Nations Security Council, have failed to halt these attacks and persuade the SPDC military dictatorship to enter into genuine dialogue.

We note that a UN Special Rapporteur report on human rights in Burma has described the attacks by the SPDC Burmese Army against Karen and other ethnic peoples in eastern Burma as being in breach of the Geneva Conventions. They are, therefore, war crimes. We also note that at least two former Special Rapporteurs on human rights in Burma have said that human rights abuses by the Burmese Army taking place in eastern Burma should be investigated as potential crimes against humanity.

The Secretary General's call for 'all concerned' to work towards a peaceful resolution misrepresents the true situation in our country, and in so doing amounts to protecting the dictatorship, which is guilty of perpetrating these heinous attacks.

What is happening in Karen State is not a civil war with two sides fighting each other. The reality is that the Burmese Army is attacking and deliberately targeting civilians, and this has been verified by the United Nations' own reports. The KNU cannot end hostilities as we are not engaged in active hostilities against the regime. Our soldiers in the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) are protecting civilians from attack and providing humanitarian assistance.

We have repeatedly tried to enter into dialogue for a peaceful resolution of the problems in Burma. The dictatorship refuses to enter into genuine dialogue, and instead demands what amounts to a total and unconditional surrender that would lead to an increase in human rights abuses against Karen people.

It is time for the United Nations Secretary General to lay blame where it belongs, and stop portraying the situation as if two sides of equal strength are in dispute. It is the military dictatorship and its proxy allies who are solely responsible for the attacks and abuses taking place in the Karen State. It is the military dictatorship, which refuses to enter into genuine dialogue and seek a peaceful solution to the problems in Burma.

In conclusion, we would like to request earnestly the Secretary General to use his good offices to apply real pressure on the dictatorship to end attacks against ethnic peoples, and enter into genuine dialogue with all stake holders, for national reconciliation and peace. He should also seek a resolution from the United Nations Security Council to reinforce this effort.

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