

Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Statement



May 10, 2018

While following, consistently and to the best of its ability, the political leadership, doctrines, policies, rules and regulations of the Karen National Union (KNU), the KNLA is a revolutionary resistance army, fighting for liberation of the Karen people. For nearly 70 years, it has been struggling to defend the Karen people from all kinds of adversaries, to provide security for their lives and homes, and to reach the goal in the form of a Karen State, free from all kinds of oppressions. However, the goal has not still been reached and the KNLA is still in the state of struggle.

In carrying out a review of all the past events, the realization that our army had to shed much blood and face great suffering in the 63 years of armed struggle, but it had not brought us anywhere closer to achievement of the Karen people's right to decide their own destiny, and our top leadership had reached the conclusion that there would be no end to the war, if problems were continued to be resolved by the way of arms. Accordingly, the choice to resume the way of negotiation and dialogue was made and, starting from 12-1-2012, talks were held with Myanmar government and the preliminary ceasefire agreement was able to be signed. Starting from that date up to the present time, a period of over 6 years has been covered.

If we undertook a review of progress of the talks engaged in by our ranking leaders, we would find that no significant result had been achieved, apart from the ability of the people to travel freely, to some extent, and some members of the organizations could go about for a visit. The people still do not get adequate opportunity to freely engage in trade and a livelihood. In the time of U Thein Sein government, leaders of our own organization and the 8 ethnic organizations reached Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) through negotiation, and signed the document on 15-10-2015. The signing ceremony was attended by international representatives and some of them signed the document as witnesses.

Since the date of signing of the NCA, though we the KNLA, have abided by the terms of the agreement to the best of our ability, it is found that the government's Tatmadaw (army) has not abided by the agreement terms, and it has regularly violated the agreement. For that reason, this statement is made so that the public, leading persons in the organizations, the international representatives, who had signed the agreement for encouragement, and the countries, which are aiding and supporting the Tatmadaw (Burma Army), may judge correctly which side is right and which side is wrong.

According to the incidents taking place currently in Mudraw District, starting from 2-3-2018, members of the Tatmadaw have been preparing to begin building road forcibly with the support of massive military force, bringing with them earth moving machines, in the Brigade-5 Area of Mudraw District, without our permission. Due to those events, the local populations have become alarmed and fled to hide in the forests.

Moreover, villagers, who return to their villages to retrieve food and household items from their houses, are fired on by the troops on sight daily, to scare them away. As a result, it has become impossible for our people to return home and engage in a livelihood. As they have become homeless people, constantly in fear and danger, it is necessary for those, who are working with the

international friends, need to know the true situation, give aid and advice. Though our leaders have called for suspension of the Tatmadaw's road building work and withdrawal of forces, the Tatmadaw leaders have disregarded the call totally and continued to build up their strength. Though our responsible leaders have met and discussed with the responsible Tatmadaw leaders as much as possible for settlement, they only give the reply that they have to do the work in compliance with order from above, and they cannot absolutely fold up their work program.

If we review the events taking place nowadays in Brigade-5 Area in Mudraw District, we cannot fail to see that they are not the ordinary work of building road but movements to annihilate us totally for domination of the area. At the same time, if the government Tatmadaw continues to implement its program and reinforce its strength instead of reducing it, armed conflict will inevitably recur. We, on our part, do not want war, but if the Tatmadaw side does not respect and abide by the code of conduct, as a final step, we will keep close watch on activities of the government Tatmadaw troops, and when it becomes totally unavoidable and battles recur, we would like the people as well as the international community to understand that it is not due to the act of the KNLA but due to the act of the government Tatmadaw.

Up to the present time, according to reports from our local responsible persons, it is obvious that the bringing in of more earth moving machines in disregard of our protest not to do road building, the bringing in of more war weapons in large quantity, the expansion of military camps, the digging of trenches and the lobbing of heavy weapon shells into farms and their vicinities are activities, which are part of a major military operations, carried out under the pretext of road building.

It is apparent that the activities of the government Tatmadaw troops are in violation of the articles of NCA, given below:

1. NCA Chapter (3) Article (5) – (a, b, d, k);
2. NCA Chapter (3) Article (7) – (f);
3. NCA Chapter (3) Article (8) – (b);
4. NCA Chapter (3) Article (9) – (c);

Hence, according to the incidences above, the conflict between us and members of the government Tatmadaw can no longer be resolved on the basis of articles of the NCA. As the government Tatmadaw has been violating the terms and conditions of the NCA for a long time, we, the KNLA, will no longer remain silent, and for the security of our nationals and for the protection of our organization, we inevitably have to defend and issue this position statement for the information of the entire people, at home and abroad.

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