



**Karen Women's Organization (KWO)**

Central office: P.O Box 19 Mae Sariang, Mae Hong Province, Thailand, 58110

Website: [karenwomen.org](http://karenwomen.org)

***Statement in Honor of International Women's Day  
March 8, 2015  
Women's Rights Are Human Rights!***

Today is a very important day for all women over the world. The 8th of March commemorates International Women's Day. The Karen Women's Organization (KWO) joins women around the world in celebrating the achievements and lives of women. In recognizing the struggle of our mothers, and their mothers, for empowerment, equality, justice, and freedom, we bring that struggle into this generation with the hope that the next generation will see those dreams fully realized.

Today in 2015 we make three demands of the Government of Burma and one plea to the International community.

KWO is deeply shocked to see the vicious crack down on peaceful student demonstrators by U Thein Sein Government. The use of force by the government was inexcusable and a direct violation of the human rights of women and students everywhere to protest peacefully. We condemn this act by the government and stand unequivocally with the students. The government's actions bring shame to all the people of Burma.

We call for the release of all the women political prisoners and activists currently being held in Burma. It is past time for the government to fully honor its public commitments to release all political prisoners and to fully respect freedom of speech and assembly.

It is also time to end the ongoing use of gender based violence by the Burmese Army in Karen State. Karen women, like all women, should not be forced to live in fear. Members of the Burmese Army currently are able to violate international human rights law with impunity. The lack of a meaningful investigation and arrests of perpetrators who raped and murdered two Kachin women teachers in January is the most recent known case of these violent crimes. The women of Burma need a fair and effective process to report crimes, have perpetrators held accountable, and see justice done. We call on the Government of Burma to meet this challenge in honor of International Women's Day. Lasting peace in Burma cannot be achieved without justice for the women of Burma.

The Burmese government is currently considering four acts that restrict women's basic human rights. KWO strongly opposes those proposed laws. We call on the Government of Burma not to pass the so called "Marriage Law" and the National Race Protection Law. Women and men must be permitted to make their own decisions about whom to marry. This law is an insult to all women of Burma. Our private decisions are ours, not those of any government.

We ask the international community to look at all the actions of the Burmese government, including those in local and rural areas. As many have noted their actions in the daily lives of local women including violence, rape, the seizing of land and the many denials of our rights to live our lives as Karen women show how far they are from the democratic society for which we struggle. Reforms exist but there has been no meaningful progress over the past year and Karen women deserve justice now. All people of Burma need the international community to play its historical role of pressuring the Government of Burma to respect human and democratic rights.

**For more information please contact;**

Nan Dah Eh Kler +66 857269291

Naw Ta Mla Saw +66 810266738