



Karen Women's Organization (KWO)
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Media Release from the Karen Women Organization

KWO Speaks in British Parliament – Meets DFID Minister

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The Karen Women's Organization has successfully completed a lobbying trip to the United Kingdom between 23-28 February 2015, to raise issues of refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as well as the political situation in Karen areas and women in Burma.

Naw Ta Mla Saw, Joint Secretary 1 of the KWO, joined a delegation of refugees from Burma together with Sally Thompson, Executive Director of The Border Consortium and Luiz Kaypoe, Secretary of the Karenni Refugee Committee.

Naw Ta Mla Saw became the first KWO member to meet with a British government Minister in the UK, when the delegation met with Desmond Swayne MP, from the Department for International Development (DFID) . She raised the need for the British government to continue humanitarian assistance for refugees and IDPs along the border of Thailand and Burma. Additionally she made clear that refugees should only return to Burma when there is a guaranteed political settlement and peace in the country.

"I was pleased to meet with the Minister and be given the opportunity to raise our concerns and to provide an update on the situation in Burma, especially in ethnic areas, directly to him", said Naw Ta Mla Saw, Joint Secretary 1 of the Karen Women's Organization. She continued "I was very happy to hear directly from the Minister that he will stand with and support refugees until they are safe to go home!"

Naw Ta Mla Saw also spoke in the British Parliament at a meeting of the All -Party Parliamentary Group for Democracy in Burma. "I thanked the British government for its support for Burma, especially in refugee camps and asked for continued assistance. I asked the British government to not just look at the situation in central Burma but also in ethnic areas and to support our human rights. I am also shocked that the British government is providing training to the Burmese Army, the same Army that attacks us and forced us to flee from our homes. I would like to see a stronger policy prioritizing human rights from the British government." In addition, she met with officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, key Parliamentarians, NGOs, the Karen Community Association UK, and visited the BBC Burmese studios in London.

"As refugees, we have lost everything, been forced to flee our homes and to live in camps in difficult conditions for many years. There is still no political settlement and safety guarantee for us to return to Burma; however services in the camps are being cut, and rations reduced. We feel we are being forced by some donors to choose between being hungry in the camps or being forced to return and be abused in Burma. We desperately want a better choice," said Naw Ta Mla Saw.

KWO is a community-based organisation with a membership of over 49,000, working to empower Karen women to develop their own communities in education, health and social welfare. KWO focuses on development and relief with the aims to empower women through offering various capacity building trainings to teach skills, build confidence and create new opportunities so that women will be better able to solve problems.

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