



ထံတူလိဂ်ဂလုဉ်ကရုာ

International Karen Organisation

Asia Pacific Region

European Region

US/Canada Region

IKO STATEMENT ON 67TH KAREN REVOLUTION DAY STATEMENT

JANUARY 31st, 2016

On this the 67th Karen Revolution Day we recognise and honour the sacrifice of those who have given their lives, blood, possessions and liberty in the cause of the political and military struggle for the liberation and right to self-determination of the Karen people since 31 January 1949.

As we reflect on the hardships endured by the Karen people during this revolutionary struggle this day is also an occasion to reflect on the current state of the Karen Revolution viewed through the four principles laid down for the Karen National Union (KNU) by Saw Ba U Gyi: 1) Surrender is out of the question; 2) The recognition of the Karen State must be completed; 3) We shall retain our arms; 4) We shall decide our own political destiny.

In regards to the first principle there is reason to suggest that participation by the KNU in the current peace process with the Thein Sein regime represents surrender. As has been noted by our political leadership the signing of a preliminary ceasefire is acceptable action in the context of revolutionary armed resistance if undertaken in order to achieve a genuine political dialogue. However, the decision to sign the National Ceasefire Agreement having failed for the past four years to forcefully respond, either politically or militarily, to attacks against civilians or achieve any reduction in the number of Tatmadaw bases and outposts in Karen State has brought the KNU to the very edge of violating this principle. The argument that this has minimised the ravages of war for Karen civilians has some validity but was this not been the long-standing argument of collaborationist groups that have now become fully integrated into the Tatmadaw? Furthermore, this stance has also emboldened the Tatmadaw to attack other ethnic armed organisations which has also been accompanied by atrocities against civilian populations in Shan and Kachin states. Do we not remember criticising other ethnic armed organizations when their ceasefires also allowed the Tatmadaw to increase the size and intensity of its operations in Karen State?

This brings us to the second principle: “The recognition of the Karen State must be completed.” While there can be no question that the current ‘Karen State Hluttaw’ falls far short of this revolutionary goal the question must be asked if the participation of the KNU in the current peace process has any prospect of seeing it achieved. Indeed, although the National Ceasefire Agreement was intended to open the door for further political dialogue can it be reasonably expected that the complete recognition of Karen State can be achieved under the undemocratic 2008 constitution imposed on the country by the Tatmadaw?

The third principle that “We shall retain our arms” is one on which no compromise has or can ever be made if the other three principles are to be realised. The invitation of Min Aung Hlaing for groups that have signed the National Ceasefire Agreement to join the Tatmadaw must be forcefully rejected. It must be made clear that the Karen National Liberation and Karen National Defence

Organization will not become a collaborationist Border Guard Force. On this Karen Revolution Day we must affirm that there can be no joining hands with a military that is not under whose personnel remain unpunished for their crimes against the Karen people.

At this time there appears to be some shadow over the fourth principle, which states that “We shall decide our own political destiny”. It has been suggested by some that the KNU has no option but to continue its participation in the current peace process because of pressure from foreign governments and the opportunities that it provides to conduct business activities without threat of disruption. Let it be made clear this year that the KNU and the Karen people are not pawns in regional or international political rivalries. If the KNU continues to pursue a peace talk that is our choice to make as is the choice to pursue autonomy in a genuine democratic federal Union of Burma. This fourth principle must be strongly reaffirmed without apology in every meeting with the Thein Sein regime or foreign actor who seeks our participation in peace talks.

Today let us unapologetically reaffirm our commitment to the ‘4 Principles’ of Saw Ba U Gyi. It is because we have not held firmly enough to these principles that today the KNU has suffered from internal disunity and failed to act as a leader among Burma’s non-Bamar ethnic nationalities. By returning to and standing by these principles we will regain our strength and achieve our national revolutionary goals.

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