



ကညီကိုဖိပှ်းဘူးနဲကရူ

**KAREN STUDENT NETWORK GROUP**

P.O.BOX 74 MAE SOT, TAK PROVINCE, 63110 THAILAND TEL : 081 0427 141  
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## Position of Karen Student Network Group on Repatriation

### MEMBER GROUPS

June 20, 2017

*Maela Karen Student  
Network Group*

### INTRODUCTION

*Wah ka Karen Student  
Network Group*

*Hteekawhee Karen  
Student Network Group*

*Hteesetmaeywa  
Karen Student  
Network Group*

*Shoklo Karen Student  
Network Group*

*Maekongka Karen  
Student Network  
Group*

*Mergui/Tavoy Karen  
Student Network Group*

*K'sorwahlay Karen  
Student Network  
Group*

*Karen Student Activist  
Group*

*Mutraw Karen Student  
Network Group-  
Karen State*

*"Students  
for a new  
society"*

*"ကိုပိလၢပုၤတၢၢ်  
သီအဂီၢ်"*

From 26-28 September 2016, Karen Student Network Group (KSNG) organized a consultation on refugee return during its 21st General Annual Meeting held in Mae La Oo refugee camp. This consultation was an important occasion for the KSNG which stands for the students and youth in educational development and works to get their voices heard in peace-building in Burma. For this consultation, KSNG invited Progressive Voice, Karen Refugee Committee, Karen Human Rights Group, and Karen Women Organization to share about Burma's current political situation, refugee situation in Thailand, Development and its impacts on land rights in Burma, violation of human rights and women rights.

Based on the outcome of the consultation, KSNG has come up with its position on refugee return to Burma. There were around 120 representatives who participated in this consultation comprising 10 KSNG working group's representatives from six camps, Karen youth leaders, women representatives and some camp leaders from Mae La Oo camp.

### ANALYSIS

Currently, there are around 100,000 refugees living in nine refugee camps along the Thailand-Burma border. Since peace talks began in 2012 between the ethnic armed groups and the Burmese government, we have clearly seen that preparations for refugee repatriation has begun. On the other hand, the country still remains under military rule as the 2008 constitution which was written by military backed constituents, gives absolute power to the military to exercise their power. During the time when Thein Sein government was in power, the political reform seemed progressively promising. However, after the National League for Democracy (NLD) won the election in 2015, more fighting has occurred between the Northern ethnic armed groups which signals that the government is losing its grip over the army. In 2016, fighting occurred between a splinter group of the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) and the combined forces of Burmese military and Border Guard Force (BGF), displacing more than 4,000 people in Karen State.

Thein Sein's government seems to have opened up a way for refugees to return, however, there is no concrete plan being implemented. In the same way, the NLD led government has no plan for refugee repatriation and no dialogue has taken place over the issue of refugees. Political instability and unreadiness from the Burma government side have led us to conclude that it is not a conducive time for refugees to return. Based upon the above analysis, The KSNG proposes two main positions based on the processes of return; firstly, pre-departure of refugees and secondly, post-departure and reintegration of refugees to Burma.



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## 1. KSNG's Position on Pre-departure Refugees

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1.1. Refugee Education should be recognized by the government and refugee students should have the right to continue their higher education.

1.2. Refugee Students should have the right to continue their further studies outside the camps in Thai universities as well as in Asia and all over the world.

1.3. Karen students and youth should have their right to freedom of forming organizations, freedom of expression and freedom to act independently for community development while in the refugee camp.

1.4. Karen student and youth should have the freedom to travel without restriction in order to build relationships with students learning outside the refugee camps including inside the country.

1.5 Karen student and youth should have the right to participate in political reform processes and should be empowered to get actively involved in peace building processes.

1.6 Organization providing services in the refugee camps should continue supporting the refugees until they can return home.

1.7 Organizations providing services in the refugee camps should support Karen students and youth to lead communities in a democratic way with ethnic's equality and help prepare them to build federal democracy in Burma.

1.8 Refugees should return only after war stops in the whole country and all the ethnic armed groups have signed the countrywide Ceasefire Agreement.

1.9 All the Burmese military camps should be relocated not close to the villages and localities and landmines must have been clear.

## 2. KSNG's Position on Post-departure and Reintegration of Refugees

2.1 Adequate land should be provided by the government for internally displaced person (IDPs) and refugees who have lost their land in line with the UN's Pinheiro Principles and with full guarantee for livelihood activities.

2.2 Return should take place only after political dialogue is successful in forming a federal democracy.

2.3 The curricula of Karen Education Department (KED) should recognized and supported by the government.

2.4 Karen national flag should be allowed to be raised in front of Karen national schools without any hindrance.

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2.5 Karen students should have the right to learn Karen curriculum which includes Karen history, culture and tradition and Karen language produced by the KED.

2.6 Karen students and youth should be provided with national identification cards identifying them as citizens with equality and without any discrimination.

2.7 Humanitarian assistance provided by supporting organization should be provided for the returning refugees until they can be self-reliant.

2.8 Karen youth should be provided with job opportunities for their livelihood and be free from any form of slavery.

2.9 Karen students and youth organizations should have the right to freedom of formation of organizations, expressing opinion and freedom to act independently in community development.

2.10 Karen students and youth organizations should have the right to build network with other ethnic groups in Burma and all over the world.