

Official Statement From Karen National Union

February 4, 2010

KNU position on Refugees

Once again, we, the Karen National Union (KNU), would like to release the statement to reaffirm our position on refugees.

After January 17, 2010, some reports in the media claimed that the Karen National Union (KNU) and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) had a meeting about the repatriation of the refugees, taking refuge in Tha Song Yang District, Thailand, since June 2009.

Given the present situation in Karen State and the political situation in Burma, the KNU would like to make it clear that it has not given any instruction to its members with regard to the repatriation of the refugees, and it is not the KNU position that the refugees should be repatriated.

There is no guarantee of safety and security in the areas where the refugees are going to be repatriated because they are still in conflict zone. In addition, human rights abuses, such as attacks on civilians, rape, forced labor, extortion etc. take place daily throughout the SPDC and DKBA-controlled areas.

The KNU position on refugees is the same as the one contained in the following KNU statement, released on May 31, 2000, 10 years ago.

- Many people of Burma have to take refuge in the neighboring countries, including Thailand, because the BSPP, the SLORC and then the SPDC troops have been perpetrating, with extreme violence, attacks on civilian population, looting and destroying villages and properties of the indigenous ethnic nationalities and the people, in general.
- It is necessary for the refugees to enjoy the rights of refugees such as the rights to security, and basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. The UNHCR, the NGOs and the countries concerned should take the responsibilities for looking after the refugees, on humanitarian grounds.
- The KNU would be much concerned if there is repatriation of the refugees either to and SPDC controlled area or an area under the control of a party subordinate to the SPDC, before there is an appropriate political settlement or peace.
- If there are adverse consequences due to forced repatriation, the party repatriating the refugees must bear all the responsibilities.

- The KNU would not bar the way of refugees, who return to their homes and villages on their own accord. The KNU views that there should not be border crossings, without check, as well as unregulated entry into and exit from refugee camps.
- Since the durable solution to the problem of refugees from Burma is to dismantle the military dictatorship and establish a genuine federal union of Burma, based on democracy, we must concentrate our effort to tackle the problem at its roots.