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An open letter to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

Dear Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,

We, the Karen Women Organization are deeply heartened to see you travel outside of Burma with the confidence that you will be able to speak freely and return home safely. We understand you are attending and addressing the World Economic Forum in Bangkok and that a visit to the border might be possible. We would like to extend an invitation to you to visit a refugee camp on the Burma border so that our community can share with you our hopes and concerns about returning to Burma.

The refugee communities are currently living with a great deal of uncertainty and worry due to the changing position of international communities regarding continuing support here and possible repatriation during these fragile peace negotiations. Part of KWO's focus is conducting consultation with communities on the issue of return. Through that process we came up with conditions for returning home to the Karen State safely with our rights protected. KWO would like to discuss with you the many issues that have been raised and our perspective on their possible resolution.

Like you, we believe women have an important role in moving these issues forward as we have always had a vital role in maintaining and sustaining our community. In the spirit of UNSC resolution 1325, which outlines the importance of women's participation and a gender perspective to all aspects of conflict prevention, management and resolution (including organizing for peace, rehabilitation, reintegration and reconstruction), we have built the Karen Women's Organization across all 7 Karen refugee camps and Karen State. We have more than 49,000 Karen women who are members of our organization. We provide services to our community like special education, safe houses for women who are victims of gender based violence, nursery schools, along with leadership development and women's direct involvement in the peace talks.

We hope you can make time to visit a refugee camp and to meet with KWO there to discuss these important issues we all are facing together. You have long been a beacon of hope for many and we have struggled for many years for basic dignity and against human rights violations. We look forward to working with you for a better, peaceful, and safe Burma and we would be honored to welcome you here on the border.

With Warmest Regards,

Nan Dah Eh Kler
Secretary
Karen Women Organization