



The Karen Women's Organization Calls for Justice for Naw Mu Naw and her Family

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The Karen Women's Organization (KWO) is reinforcing our call for justice following the murder of Naw Mu Naw, a Karen woman who was shot and killed by two Burma Army soldiers on 16 July 2020. Shortly after, the Burma Army stated that the soldiers responsible had received the 'maximum punishment' through the military courts and were found guilty of murder, public intoxication, absence without leave and abuse of arms. It remains unclear what the details of their sentences are. There should be full transparency on the case proceedings: the charges and the verdict must be made fully available to the public, as well as how sentences will be carried out.

The Burmese Army has shown over many years and in countless cases that justice is rarely provided by the military justice system. The lack of public accountability in this terrible crime is yet another example. Therefore, KWO calls for this case to be immediately referred to a civilian court in accordance with section 71 of the 1959 Defense Services Act. The Act requires that soldiers who commit crimes of murder, homicide, and rape should be tried in a civilian criminal court rather than a court-martial, unless they were "on active service". As such, the Burma Army must immediately transfer this case to a competent civilian court to ensure the military is held accountable for their crimes, with full transparency to the Karen community.

In the past, the Burma Army has punished soldiers responsible for committing crimes by moving them to other battalions. This is not justice. Moving soldiers evades justice and makes a mockery of the systems designed to uphold the rule of law. Further, it does little to stop soldiers from committing the same crime, or a new crime. The repeated denial of basic human rights shows a lack of will to change the systems that allow the abuses to happen.

The demands of the civilians need to be considered to maintain the safety and build trust in the rule of law. The recent demonstration by almost 5000 villagers in Mutraw district and Kler Lwee Htu District calling for justice and the withdrawal of Burma Army camps near their villages is one of the many ways local people are rising up to express their frustration.

KWO believes that the time when women are silently abused and killed is over. The NLD government and the Burma Army need to listen to their calls and act immediately. The Army is not protecting civilians, they are abusing them. As long as that is true, it is impossible to believe in the Army's commitment to true and meaningful peace. This murder cannot go unpunished. Our calls must be heard.

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