



## **The Karen Women's Organization stands with Doo Tha Htu District's Civilians Demanding Withdrawal of Burma Army Troops & An Immediate end to Fighting**

**28 January 2021:** The Karen Women's Organization (KWO) supports the calls of over 2,000 Karen villagers who demonstrated yesterday and on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January in Doo Tha Htu District to demand the withdrawal of the Burma Army and an end to fighting. This is not the first time that Karen civilians have demonstrated against the presence of government troops in their villages. During January 2021 there have also been protests against the Burma Army in Mutraw and Kler Lwee Htu districts. The Burma Army must listen to their calls if they are sincere in upholding their stated commitment to the peace process. For decades, the safety of innocent villages has been undermined by the political and economic interests of the Burma Army. This must end.

Following a series of artillery attacks that displaced thousands at the end of December 2020 in northern Karen State, violence has continued to escalate in Mutraw and Kler Lwee Htu districts. Over 5,000 people have been forcibly displaced, several have been severely injured, and a village head was killed. A local villager's home in Mutraw District was also burnt down by the Burma Army after clashes broke out in Mae Wai. Women, children and the elderly are especially at risk. Humanitarian aid cannot be delivered to IDPs in Kler Lwee Htu due to ongoing mortar shelling by the Burma Army. We call on the Burma Army to immediately allow humanitarian assistance to be provided to these IDPs.

While people around the world are facing the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic, Karen people are also being forced to suffer from the ongoing conflict. Despite fears of the virus, our communities have been driven to protest many times to demand the withdrawal of Burma Army soldiers from their areas, as well as an immediate halt to harmful development projects.

The Burma Army's renewed attacks have involved artillery shelling, frequent skirmishes, indiscriminate firing, and use of spy-drones in civilian areas. As tensions between the KNU and Burma Army build, pressure is mounting on domestic and international actors to respond with urgency and commit to holding the Burma Army accountable for their crimes.

KWO calls on all government stakeholders to act now to bring pressure on the Burma Army. The demands made bravely by the demonstrators must be heeded and acted upon to ensure pathways to justice and peace. We remain honored to stand with them and committed to raising their voices.

Executive Committee Members  
KWO Central