



Statement by The Karen Peace Support Network

For Immediate Release 18th January 2021

Urgent International Action Needed in Response to Burma Army Artillery Attacks in Northern Karen State

The Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN) condemns escalating artillery attacks by the Burma Army in Mutraw (Papun) and Kler Lwe Htoo (Nyaunglebin) districts of northern Karen State, which have displaced over 3,700 villagers, and killed a village chief on January 12.

On 15th January, Infantry Battalion LIB 339 of the Burma Army fired heavy mortars in Mae Wai resulting in serious head injuries to an eleven year old boy.

These attacks, indiscriminately targeting civilians, constitute war crimes. The obstruction of humanitarian aid to those displaced is also a violation of international humanitarian law. The international community, including the United Nations Security Council, has a responsibility to uphold international law and are failing in their responsibilities.

KPSN demands that the Burma Army immediately end these attacks and pull back troops from these areas so villagers can return home. International donors to the 'peace process', including the Joint Peace Fund, should suspend funding for the process until the Burma Army stops violating the terms of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).

Since early December 2020, five Burma Army battalions have been firing shells around their bases in Luthaw and Dweh Lo townships of Mutraw (KNU Brigade 5), causing 3,176 villagers from twelve villages to flee and hide in the surrounding jungle. Many of these villagers were similarly displaced last year by Burma Army shelling during a fierce offensive to push through a strategic road into northern Mutraw.

Thousands of Kler Lwee Htu and Mutraw villagers have publicly protested these attacks, most recently on January 6, 2021 in Mu Traw, calling for the Burma Army to stop road building and remove military posts from their area.

On January 11, 2021, Burma Army IB 57 started shelling around the village of Ta Kaw Der, in Ler Doh township, Kler Lwe Htoo (KNU Brigade 3), west of Mutraw, displacing a further 588 villagers, and causing

the closure of community schools in the area. This is the first displacement in this area since the start of the peace process in 2012.

The displaced villagers are facing extreme hardship, but local community-based groups have been blocked from accessing them by the Burma Army.

There have been no statements from 'peace process' donors calling for an end to these attacks and for humanitarian access to those who have been displaced.

On January 12, troops from Burma Army LIB 404, under Military Operations Command 8, fired shells from their base into fields around Ter Nay Taw village, Mae Cho village tract, Dweh Lo township of Mutraw. A 60 mm shell hit and killed 35-year-old Saw Maw Tha Hser, the Ter Nay Taw village chief, who was farming in his field. He is the father of six children.

KPSN strongly condemns this unprovoked aggression by the Burma Army, which is flagrantly ignoring the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement signed by the KNU, as well as its own unilateral countrywide ceasefire declared during the Covid-19 crisis.

KPSN calls urgently for the Burma Army to immediately end these attacks, and pull back their troops from Karen territories, so that inclusive peace negotiations can begin.

KPSN also urges international donors to suspend all funding for the 'peace process' until the Burma Army ends their attacks throughout the country, and begins withdrawing troops from contested ethnic areas.

For more information contact:

Saw Alex +95 0977 931 3575 (Karen English Burmese)

Naw Wah Ku Shee +66 086 118 2261 (Karen English)