

To

U Win Myint  
President  
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi  
State Counsellor  
Chairperson of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre  
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

20 January 2021

**Subject: Open letter from civil society organizations concerning the current tensions and conflicts and the situation of local people affected by war in ceasefire area in Karen State in Southeastern Myanmar**

Dear President U Win Myint, and State Counsellor and Chairperson of the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,

In relation to the above mentioned matter, we, the undersigned (172) civil society organizations and networks, are gravely concerned and would like to sincerely request you to immediately take action and resolve the tensions and conflicts between the Myanmar Tatmadaw (Myanmar military) and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) under the control of the Karen National Union (KNU). The increasing armed engagements between the two armed actors have displaced almost 4,000 people who have been forced to flee their homes and taking shelter in adjacent areas in Hpapun, Thaton and Nyaunglaypin Districts during this challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In December 2020, we learned that the Myanmar Tatmadaw ignored the provisions contained within the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) and began to expand the presence of its troops in Hpapun District and other areas designated under the KNU's control, creating tension between the Myanmar Tatmadaw and the KNU, resulting in armed clashes breaking out between the Mae Wei based Myanmar Tatmadaw troops and a battalion of KNLA troops (under KNU control), since 1 December. Over 3,000 civilians have had to flee to avoid the fighting in Hpapun District as the Myanmar Tatmadaw troops shelled in areas where villagers were working for their livelihoods, including inside and outside villages. In addition, on 12 January 2021, the Infantry Battalion 404 of the Myanmar Tatmadaw shelled Mae Cho Village Tract in Hpapun District killing a 35-year-old village chief. Furthermore, on 15 January, an 11-year-old boy was seriously injured as the Light Infantry Battalion 339 of the Myanmar Tatmadaw intentionally continued its artillery shelling of Mae Wei Village in Hpapun District. The boy is now receiving medical treatment. We call on the government to bring justice for those who have suffered casualties and to ensure that such incidents do not take place again.

At present, we have learned that the tensions between the two groups are rising, leading to deterioration of trust. We believe that an end to tensions and fighting between the two sides is difficult, particularly if the Myanmar Tatmadaw continues its military movements in KNU designated areas in contravention of the NCA.

In addition, 790 villagers from four villages in Nyaunglaypin District have had to flee to avoid the ongoing fighting between the KNU troops and the Myanmar Tatmadaw since 28 December 2020, as the Myanmar Tatmadaw entered into KNU designated territories. On 19 January, a 41-year-old man was injured by the artillery shelling of the Light Infantry Battalion 603 of the Myanmar Tatmadaw in Pae Kaw

Hkee Village in Kyaukkyi Township. We have learned that villagers are especially concerned that this will lead to the expansion of armed clashes in the region as the Myanmar Tatmadaw have reinforced their troops in KNU controlled areas in Hpapun and Nyaunglaypin Districts since December 2020. We are particularly concerned of the continued displacement of ethnic people at a time when the country is striving for national reconciliation and long-lasting peace in the pursuit of a genuine federal democratic country.

Upon observing the catalyst for such conflict and tensions between the NCA signatories – an ethnic armed organization, the KNU, and the Myanmar Tatmadaw – we have found that the Myanmar Tatmadaw broke the NCA as they have taken positions and expanded deployment, giving different excuses, including in the name of development projects. Therefore, we call on the government, elected by the people, to look towards national reconciliation and genuine sustainable peace, and to immediately implement the calls made by more than 10,000 villagers from 12 villages in Luthaw Township who protested on 30 December 2020, to stop the Myanmar Tatmadaw from invading the KNU controlled territories and expanding its forces in contravention of the NCA’s agreements, among other calls.

In our country, civil war has been raging for more than 70 years and it is still far from the genuine peace that our people aspire to today. Furthermore, we believe that the Myanmar Tatmadaw’s use of state funds to continue using military force across Myanmar, particularly in ethnic areas is inappropriate and leads us further astray from peace.

In the time of conflict, women and children are the most vulnerable to human rights violations, including sexual violence, and their rights to education and healthcare can be impacted. As Myanmar is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Myanmar is obligated to protect the rights of women and children in line with these conventions.

Finally, it is our belief that the armed conflicts in ethnic areas in Myanmar and its root causes are political in nature and must be solved by political means. To solve this political issue via political means, we, the undersigned civil society organizations, would like to respectfully call on the President and State Counsellor to develop political opportunities and means of solution, as well as to withdraw and stop the expanding deployment and occupation of the Myanmar Tatmadaw in ethnic areas.

Respectfully,

**Signed by:**

1. ဒို့မြေကွန်ရက်
2. စစ်တောင်းသံစဉ်လူမှုကွန်ယက်
3. မေတ္တာရှေ့ဆောင်လူမှုအဖွဲ့ (သံတောင်ကြီး)
4. သင့်မြတ်လိုသူများ ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးပရဟိတအဖွဲ့
5. အားသစ်ရောင်ခြည်အဖွဲ့
6. ရွှေပန်းပျိုလက် (ကလေးသူငယ်များယဉ်ကျေးလိမ္မာရေးနှင့် အကြမ်းဖက်မှုပျောက်ရေးအဖွဲ့)
7. လူမှုရေးရာသူတေသနအဖွဲ့
8. ကျေးဇူးတော်နှလုံးသားဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း
9. ဂီတရပ်ဝန်း
10. အစ္စလာမ့်တံခွန်လူမှုကူညီရေးအဖွဲ့
11. ရှစ်လေးလုံးမျိုးဆက်သစ် (မိုးညှင်း)
12. သံဖြူဇရပ်မြို့နယ်လုံးဆိုင်ရာမွန်လူငယ်အဖွဲ့အစည်း

13. ရွှေခြင်္သေ့တောင်သူကွန်ယက်
14. ကမ်းခြေအလှဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးကွန်ယက်
15. ကမ်းခြေအားမာန် ရေလုပ်သားငယ်များဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးအဖွဲ့
16. ပန်းတိုင်ရှင် အမျိုးသမီးဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးအဖွဲ့
17. ရောင်နီဦးလူမှုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအဖွဲ့
18. စာဖြူလယ်သမားဦးဆောင်အဖွဲ့
19. အနာဂတ်အလင်းသစ်လူငယ်ဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအဖွဲ့
20. ပုံရိပ်စစ် လူမှုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအဖွဲ့
21. ပွင့်ဖြူဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးအဖွဲ့
22. မင်းဘူးတောင်သူအစုအဖွဲ့
23. မင်းလှတောင်သူအစုအဖွဲ့
24. ဂန့်ဂေါ့ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေးအဖွဲ့
25. ပုံတောင်ပုံညာတွဲလက်များ
26. ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးကွန်ယက်
27. လွတ်လပ်သောအရှိချင်းအမျိုးသားများအင်အားစု
28. ဝံလက်ဖောင်ဒေးရှင်း
29. မြန်မာနိုင်ငံမသန်စွမ်းသူများရှေ့ဆောင်အဖွဲ့
30. ဗေခါ လူမှုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအဖွဲ့
31. တွံတေးကွန်ရက်
32. မျိုးဆက်သစ် (ရှမ်းပြည်)
33. အလင်းသစ် ကျေးလက်ဒေသဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအဖွဲ့
34. အားမာန်သစ် ကျေးလက်ဒေသဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအဖွဲ့
35. 3 Dimension Community Development Group
36. Accountable Actions for Arakan
37. Action Committee for Democracy Development
38. Action Group for Farmer Affair
39. Active Women Development Initiative
40. AISANA
41. Ann New Generation
42. Ann Women Generation Network
43. Arakan CSO Network
44. Arakan Students' Union
45. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners
46. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters
47. Athan - Freedom of Expression Activist Organization
48. Ayayarwaddy Youth Network
49. Ayeyarwaddy Transparency and Accountability Association
50. Ayeyarwaddy West Development Organization (Ngaphae)
51. BEE House
52. Bilin CSO Network
53. Burma Monitor
54. Burmese Women's Union
55. CAN-Myanmar
56. Center for Social Integrity
57. Charity Youth Organization
58. Child Protection Network
59. Chin Human Rights Organization
60. Chin MATA Working Group
61. Citizens Action for Transparency

62. Colorful Girls Organization
63. Community Response Group (ComReG)
64. Crown School of Capacity Building and Leadership
65. CSO Thaton
66. Democracy, Peace and Women's Organization
67. Democratic Education Corner
68. Equality Myanmar
69. Farmers and Land Workers Union (Myanmar)
70. Farmers Development and Environmental Watch Group
71. Freedom and Labor Action Group
72. Future Light Center
73. Future Young Pioneer Organization
74. Gaia Organization
75. Gender Equality Network
76. Generation Wave
77. Genuine People's Servants
78. Golden Future Social Development Organization
79. Gracious Heart Foundation
80. Green Rights Organization
81. Halcyon
82. Harmony Youth Association
83. Htoi Gender and Development Foundation
84. Htum Thit Sa Rural Development Organization
85. Human Rights Educators Network
86. Human Rights Foundation of Monland
87. Humanity Institute
88. IFI Watch Myanmar
89. iSchool Myanmar
90. Justice Movement for Community (Innlay)
91. Kachin National Youth Network
92. Kachin Women's Association Thailand
93. Karen Affairs Committee
94. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network
95. Karen Human Rights Group
96. Karen Institute of Strategic Studies
97. Karen Organization for Relief and Development
98. Karen Peace Support Network
99. Karen Refugee Committee
100. Karen Rivers Watch
101. Karen Student Network Group
102. Karen Teachers Working Group
103. Karen Women's Organization
104. Karen Youth - Rangoon
105. Karen Youth Network
106. Karenni Human Rights Group
107. Karenni State Farmer Union
108. Kayah Earthrights Action Network
109. Keng Tung Land Group
110. Kyaukkyi Development Watch

111. Kyaukpyu Rural Development Association
112. Let's Help Each Other
113. Light Social Development Organization
114. Lighthouse Social Development Organization
115. Literature Garden Organization
116. Maramagri Youth Network
117. Maye Bon Youth Association
118. Metta Development Foundation
119. Min Bra Youth Association
120. Mrauk-U Youths Association
121. Mro Youth Association
122. Myanmar Cultural Research Society
123. Myanmar People Alliance (Shan State)
124. National Indigenous Women Resource Center
125. National Network for Education Reform
126. Nyan Lynn Thit Analytica
127. Olive Organization
128. Open Development Foundation
129. Oway Institute
130. Pa-O Women's Union
131. Pa-O Youth Organization
132. Pauktaw Public Center
133. Paung Ku
134. Paungsee Myittar Organization
135. Peace Working Committee
136. Progressive Voice
137. Rakhine Youth New Generation - Network
138. Rambree Youth Network
139. Rathedaung Youth Network
140. Regional Development Organization
141. Reliable Organization
142. Saytanashaesoung CSO
143. Shan MATA
144. Shan State Peace Task Force
145. Shan Women Development Network
146. Southern Youth Development Organization
147. Swamsutyi CSO
148. Synergy - Social Harmony Organization
149. Ta'ang Legal Aid
150. Ta'ang Women's Organization
151. Takapaw Group
152. Taungoke Youth Network
153. Thandar Rontwee Youth Network
154. The Seagull:Human Rights, Peace & Development
155. Thet Youth Organization
156. True Friends
157. Union of Karenni State Youth
158. Waingmaw CSOs Network
159. Women Empowerment and Development Organization (WE DO)

160. Women Generation
161. Women's League of Burma
  - Burmese Women's Union
  - Kachin Women's Association Thailand
  - Karen Women's Organization
  - Karenni National Women's Organization
  - Kayan Women's Organization
  - Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization
  - Lahu Women's Organization
  - Pa-O Women's Union
  - Shan Women's Action Network
  - Ta'ang Women's Organization
  - Tavoy Women's Union
  - Women's for Justice
162. Women's Organizations Network
163. Yangon Watch
164. Zinlum Committee (Tanphaye)
165. Zomi Students and Youth Organization

#### **Updated list**

166. Summer Shelter Library
167. Kanbawza youth library
168. Enlightened Myanmar Research Foundation
169. Kayah Baptist Association – Christian Social Service and Development Department
170. Women for Women Foundation
171. YOUNITY
172. Kawyaw National Youth Organization

[View the open letter on our website with a full list of 172 civil society organizations that were endorsed.](#)