



Statement from Karen organisations worldwide

For Immediate Release, 7 May 2025

Karen and Karenni refugees face starvation as daily rations slashed to mere 10 US cents

108,000 refugees—predominantly Karen and Karenni people—living in camps along the Thailand-Burma border now face an imminent humanitarian crisis following devastating cuts to their already meager food rations.

The situation has become dire: rations for children under 5 years old will be reduced to just 53 Thai Baht (approximately \$1.50) per month—a mere 5 US cents per day for food. Those over 5 years old will receive only 87 Thai Baht (about \$2.40) monthly, equating to 8 US cents daily per person. Even before these drastic reductions, food provisions were already below the minimum required for survival.

Over the past 15 years, donors have been cutting or reducing funding for refugees in Thailand. As a result, this humanitarian emergency stems from a long term reduction in international aid. New cuts in international aid, including US AID, are also expected to severely impact food assistance for internally displaced people (IDPs) throughout Burma, including over 1 million displaced persons in Kawthoolei (Karen areas) and neighboring regions—the highest number in Karen history.

To prevent mass starvation among refugees and IDPs, we call for immediate action:

- The USA and other donors must reverse long term aid cuts to refugees in Thailand;
- Existing donors must increase funding for both refugees in Thailand and IDPs;
- Thailand must grant refugees legal work authorization; and
- Thailand must lift restrictions on cross-border aid delivery to areas not controlled by the Burmese military, for example, in territories administered by the Karen National Union and Karenni Interim Executive Committee.

Urgent efforts must be made to address the fundamental causes of forced displacement that have created refugees and internally displaced persons. The Burmese military must face stronger sanctions cutting off revenue, arms, and equipment. A complete coordinated global embargo on jet fuel supplies to Burma must be implemented, as airstrikes are driving displacement and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis as well as creating an economic crisis. Demining programs in Karen homeland are essential to enable safe return and agricultural self-sufficiency.

The vast majority of refugees desperately wish to return home and live in peace. Our people do not want to depend on aid indefinitely. Until safe repatriation becomes possible, refugees seek the right to work legally in Thailand, where they can contribute positively to their host country.

These aid reductions could not come at a worse time. The Burmese military continues to target homes, schools, plantations, religious sites, and medical centers with airstrikes and artillery. Beyond the humanitarian crisis and human rights abuses perpetrated by the Burmese military, our people also face natural disasters. In March, some of our Karen areas were affected by Burma earthquake. Last year's planting season was devastated by widespread flooding and crop diseases throughout Kawthoolei, further intensifying this year's food insecurity.

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1. Australian Karen Organisation (AKO)
2. Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT)
3. Burma Medical Association (BMA)
4. European Karen Network(EKN)
5. Karen Community Association UK (KCA-UK)
6. Karen Community in Norway (KCN)
7. Karen Community of Canada (KCC)
8. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)
9. Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)
10. Karen Office of Relief and Development (KORD)
11. Karen Organization of America (KOA)
12. Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN)
13. Karen Refugee Committee Education Entity (KRCEE)
14. Karen Rivers Watch (KRW)
15. Karen Student Network Group (KSNG)
16. Karen Swedish Community (KSC)
17. Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG)
18. Karen Women's Organisation (KWO)
19. Karen Youth Organisation (KYO)
20. Mae Tao Clinic (MTC)