



The Karenni Human Rights Group Calls for a Compassionate and Coordinated Response to the Refugee Crisis in Burma

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For Immediate Release

Ahead of World Refugee Day, the Karenni Human Rights Group (KnHRG) is concerned about the ongoing deterioration of civilian rights and freedoms. In Karenni State and across the country, a crisis of worsening scale and intensity has cost people their lives and their basic freedoms. The military junta has created and fuelled a war that has left thousands without a place to call home. Since 2021, at least 250,000 people in Karenni State have been displaced and urgently need emergency humanitarian aid.

Despite the need for life-saving assistance, severe shortages of food, medicine and basic shelter persist. Makeshift camps and temporary stations are increasingly targeted by the junta and are not guaranteed safe zones. As conditions on the ground worsen, Karenni people are seeking refuge across the Thai border in Mae Hong Son province. For decades, camps have shielded vulnerable groups from the violence that has forced them from their homes. However, Thailand is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

After years of advocacy by civil society organizations, Thai policy shifted in a landmark way last year, with the government granting registered refugees (aged 18 to 59) living in the nine camps the right to work legally. The announcement came not long after the fallout from US government funding cuts to life-saving humanitarian programs and social services that were being operated in the camps. While this was an important step forward, additional challenges remain to be addressed, including protection concerns. KnHRG is grateful to the Royal Thai Government for this important step forward in advancing refugee rights, as well as for issuing Identification cards that permit legal employment.

Recommendations from border-based groups working with and supporting refugees continue to call on neighbouring countries for support, especially amid ongoing reductions in foreign aid. Refugee rights are human rights and demand a compassionate and coordinated effort to ensure they are protected and enforced.

The strength and resilience shown by internally displaced people and refugees are a testament to their ability to endure adversity. Despite enduring immense hardship, they have also overcome significant hurdles, with many becoming leaders in various capacities, including as educators, rights defenders and mobilizers in their communities. On World Refugee Day and every day, the remarkable tenacity they embody must be acknowledged.

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The Karenni Human Rights Group is a community organization dedicated to reporting on the current situation on the ground in Karenni State and the human rights abuses committed by the junta.