

Joint Statement of the Kachin Organizations and Civil Society Groups Urge the United States Government to renew the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act

11th July, 2013

We, Kachin civilians and activists from 30 organizations are calling on President Obama, Speaker Boehner and Majority Leader Reid to renew the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act, which will expire at the end of July 2013.

It is urgently needed to maintain pressure on the Burmese government to stop its policies of military aggression, and to begin a political dialogue to end the civil war in Burma.

In June 2011, the Burmese government broke its 17-year ceasefire with the Kachin Independence Organization, launching large-scale military operations throughout Kachin State and northern Shan State. Widespread human rights violations, including torture, extrajudicial killing and sexual violence, by Burmese troops have displaced over 100,000 civilians. Most of the displaced are sheltering in makeshift camps along the Chinese border, where the government continues to restrict humanitarian aid.

The war is continuing, even while the Burmese government is receiving accolades from the international community for bringing peace to the country. Despite ongoing ceasefire talks with the Kachin Independence Organization, Burmese government troops are continuing to launch attacks in Kachin areas.

In the past few weeks, there has been heavy fighting in northern Shan State where rubies are produced, displacing hundreds of civilians.

One of the root causes of the conflict is the issue of natural resources. Under the current constitution, the central Burmese government has total decision making power over the extraction and sale of natural resources in the ethnic states. Unless political dialogue is held to address key issues such as ownership and control of natural resources in the Kachin areas, the conflict and widespread suffering of our people will continue.

This is why pressure must be maintained on the Burmese government through continued sanctions to establish genuine peace in our country. Lifting of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act will send the message that the United States condones the Burmese government's war against the Kachin and other ethnic minorities, and its unjust exploitation of resources in the ethnic states.

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From the following Kachin organizations:

1. All Kachin Student and Youth Union (AKSYU)
2. Bridging Rural Integrated Development and Grassroots Empowerment (BRIDGE)
3. Houston Kachin Community, TX
4. Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT)
5. Kachin Alliance (USA)
6. Kachin Development Organization (KDG)
7. Kachin Development Network Group (KDNG)
8. Kachin Canadian Association
9. Kachin National Organization (UK)
10. Kachin Literature and Culture Community-Singapore (JLH – Singapore)
11. Kachin Catholic Community, Dallas-Ft. Worth, Texas
12. Kachin Development Foundation, Florida
13. Kachin Development Society of Nebraska
14. Kachin Culture and Literature Association of San Francisco Bay Area
15. Kachin Community of Indiana
16. Kachin Community, Los Angeles
17. Kachin Community of Louisiana
18. Kachin Community of Mississippi
19. Kachin Community of Tennessee
20. Kachin Christian Fellowship of Utah
21. Kachin Baptist Church of Georgia
22. Kachin Catholic Community, Austin, TX
23. Michigan Kachin Community
24. Mid-Atlantic Kachin Christian Fellowship
25. NINGTAWN, Kachin Education Support Group
26. New Zealand Kachin Community
27. Pennsylvania/New Jersey Kachin Fellowship
28. Phoenix Kachin Community, Arizona
29. United Kachin Association, Dallas, Texas
30. Washington Kachin Fellowship Committee