



KARENNI NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE PARTY
HEADQUARTERS
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Appeal for the Karenni Army's name to be removed from the list of non-state armed groups making use of child soldiers in armed conflict

The Executive Committee of the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP) are once again calling on the Secretary-General of the United Nations for their name to be removed from the list of non-state armed groups utilizing child soldiers. We, the KNPP reiterate that our armed group, the Karenni Army (KA), no longer recruit child soldiers and we do not have any under-age soldiers in our ranks.

This is in accordance with the Karenni State Constitution's article 29(5) that all underage children shall be free from conscription to army service.

The KNPP reaffirm that we wish to see an end to the involvement of child soldiers in armed conflict and the complete demobilization of child soldiers by any armed groups operating in Burma and in the ethnic states and to this end they signed a Deep of Commitment to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children on 13th April 2007 and to allow outsiders to independently monitor our compliance. The KNPP also issued statements in August 2006 and November 2007 clearly stating our commitment to adhere to international conventions against the use of child soldiers.

Despite this, in his seventh report to the Security Council on children and armed conflict (A/62/609-S/2007/757 – issued 21 December 2007), the Secretary-General included the Karenni Army on the list of perpetrators who recruit child soldiers.

The UN later acknowledged that they had received no new reports of recruitment of Child Soldiers by the KNPP, but argued that as the SPDC limit access to our areas of operation they could not verify this for themselves.

<http://www.un.org/children/conflict/english/myanmar.html>

In response the KNPP issued a statement in February 2009 once again inviting interested parties, including the UN's country representative, UNICEF and Human Rights Watch, to visit the areas where the KA operate to verify these facts for themselves, but as in the past, we did not receive any response to these invitation.

The KNPP repeat that we are willing to offer monitoring team logistic assistance and open access to our army bases and the front line so they can monitor the situation. We are also willing to have dialogue at any time.

In 2006 the KNPP contacted Human Rights Watch (HRW) to enquire why they had mentioned the KA in the list of those who had child soldiers in their ranks. Human Rights Watch agreed that they had merely repeated information published by the UN. They offered to write to the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict to ask about the information they had received and address the changed situation in the next report. HRW also confirmed they had not received any new reports of child recruitment by the KA and in August 2007, they sent a representative to Mae Hong Son to make enquiries. The KNPP was therefore shocked to see the unjustified inclusion of the KA in the 2007 report.

The KNPP is currently drawing up new regulations for recruitment into the Karenni Army and this includes measures to ensure no underage person can inadvertently be recruited into the Karenni Army. We welcome guidance from International Organizations in drawing up this document to ensure the policy cannot be misinterpreted and contains sufficient safeguards.

In conclusion the KNPP once again reiterate that there is no justification for the inclusion of the Karenni Army in the list of non-state armed groups who include child soldiers in their ranks. The unjustified inclusion of our name damages the credibility of the UN Report. We therefore request that the Secretary-General of the United Nations remove the name of the KA from the list and issue a statement to this effect.

Executive Committee
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