

Call for the KA's name removal



KARENNI NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE PARTY
OFFICE OF HEADQUARTERS

February 12, 2008
Press Release No. 1/08

Call 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

We, the Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), would like to appeal once again to Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, for the name of our armed force, the Karenni Army, to be removed from the list of non-state armed groups utilizing child soldiers. The Karenni Army has worked hard to entirely eliminate the recruitment of young people into its forces and KNPP and the KA have issued two statements – in August 2006 and November 2007 - clearly stating our commitment to adhere to international conventions against the use of child soldiers.

There have been no children in the KA ranks for a few years now. 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.

As mentioned in previous statements, representatives of both the KNPP and KA met with UNICEF, Thailand twice to discuss this matter and in April 2007 we signed a Deed of Commitment promising to end child recruitment, demobilize children in the force and allow outsiders to independently monitor our compliance.

We have on many occasions invited 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. Furthermore the SPDC Prime Minister, Thein Sein, announced that he would allow UN representatives to visit the areas where ethnic armed groups operate to monitor the situation himself; but no one has responded to these invitations.

The KNPP and KA warmly welcome a visit by the UN's representatives and independent agencies to the area where we operate. The KA will offer them logistic assistance and open access so they can monitor the situation. We too 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.

At the same time, we 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. We ask you to remove the name of the KA from the list and issue a statement to this effect.

Executive Committee
Karenni National Progressive Party