

Statement on the Use of Karen Civilians for Forced Labor and as Human Shield by Burma Army

26 May 2011

Though the leading members of the Burma government have shed their military uniforms for a civilian image and rule, treatment of the ethnic civilians by the Burma Army troops is the same as it has been under the military rule. As before, the Burma Army troops continue to perpetrate widespread and gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity on the ethnic civilian populations.

On April 24, 2011, Burma Army troops from Infantry Battalion 96 (IB-96) forcibly seized 7 women and one man of ages from 26 to 40 years from Mehway village, in Papun District of Karen State, and used them as human shields, when they had to move to another place in the rotation of duty. In this incident, two mothers among the women had to take along their children, aged 2 and 3.

On the same day, battalion commander of Light Infantry Battalion 214 (LIB-214) of Light Infantry Division 11 (LID-11) ordered Toh Poe Pa Der villagers to carry 5 bags of rice, per household, from Kawpu village to the 16 miles Post. When the villagers refused, he destroyed 29 farms of the villagers. As a result of destruction of the farms, the villagers have to face a serious problem of survival and security.

There are such incidents of forced labor and other forms of human rights violations by Burma Army troops in every district of the KNU. Within the four months period from the beginning of January to the end of April 2011, in 5 districts of the Karen State, the Burma army troops used 2051 villagers as forced labor and 1,220 villagers, including women, as mine sweepers/human shields. As a result, a 35 years old woman of Kawkareik District (Dooطلا District) died from stepping on a landmine. In addition, they killed seven villages extra-judicially.

Forced labor on the villagers and the use of them as mine sweepers/human shields by the Burma Army troops are a cause for concern for us, as they seriously threaten the survival of the villagers and their security.

We, the KNU, regard extra-judicial killing and the use of civilians, including women and children, as mine sweepers/human shields in war zones as a serious crime.

In conclusion, we call upon the international community and the UN to support and give mandate for the formation of Commission of Inquiry to investigate war crimes and crimes

against humanity perpetrated by the Burma Army troops in their military operations, under the orders of their generals and the government.

Supreme Headquarters
Karen National Union