



**OFFICE OF THE SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
KAREN NATIONAL UNION
KAWTHOOLEI**

KNU Letter of Felicitation sent on the Occasion of Karen New Year Day of 2753

Today, the first day of Pya-tho Month 2753 Karen Era (K. E.), which falls on the first of January 2014, is the Karen New Year's Day. On this special and blessed day, we wish the entire Karen people and all people of the country to have unity, peace, prosperity and wellbeing of the mind and body.

Celebration of the New Year's Day is one of the characteristics and traditional customs of the Karen people and the day has been honored with celebration throughout the many ages. In accordance with historical experiences and livelihood they go through and the weather patterns, plants and flowers, the years are labelled and counted, months are counted and named, the start and end of the year are designated. As the years of the Karen calendar are counted from the time the second wave of migration of the Karen people entered the country now known as Burma in the year 739 B.C., the year now according to K. E. is 2753.

Being a nationality, the Karen people desire to lead a life in their own characteristic ways and, being human beings, they have the aspirations to become developed in all aspects, like the other nationalities, and live in peace.

The Karen people have the rights to maintain and protect fully their national individualities, dignity and legacy, and promote them in consonant with the advancement of time and in their own characteristic way. Every Karen has the responsibility to maintain and safeguard the Karen national culture, traditions and customs so that the Karen people may live on as a nationality.

At the same time, this matter must be precisely and fully stated in the State Constitution that those who are ruling the country have the duty to promote, assist and support the right. As this matter is not mentioned in the current State Constitution and as the government neither assists nor supports the right, the characteristics of the Karen people are fading and disappearing among the Karen people.

As the Karen people have to face cruel persecution and intimidation throughout the ages, they have to protect and maintain assiduously and relentlessly their national characteristics and the developments gained, so that they may continue to survive as a nationality. The basic problem is the non-recognition of differences in characteristics and the social lives between nationalities.

These things cause the rise, among nationalities, of injustice, oppression and domination, which lead to tension and problems. As these problems have not been resolved peacefully and justly, armed conflicts have arisen between the ethnic nationalities and the rulers representing the major nationality, since the time of independence.

In accordance as the lengthening problems and armed conflicts, the country descends deeper into poverty. Moreover, because of poor governance and exploitation by those in power, and the propertied and the privileged class, the people have become impoverished.

The Karen people are one of the nationalities inhabiting this country and, like the others, they have also the right to govern this country. The country's development, regression, peace, prosperity and the numerous problems concern the Karen people also.

Nowadays, the Karen National Union, together with other ethnic armed resistance organizations, which are striving for equality and self-determination, is talking with the government for nationwide ceasefire agreement, in order to negotiate for resolution of the political problems. Ceasefire is the necessary first step that must be achieved for the resolution of political problems. If there is no ceasefire and resolution of the political problems, peace in the country cannot arise. If there is no peace, the country cannot develop.

Only if there is justice, equality and self-determination, peace within the country will arise among the nationalities and the people. The building of internal peace is in the hands of the Karen people and each and every citizen of the country.

Unity must be established among the Karen people and among people of the nationalities. Respect for and recognition of the differences between one nationality and another is the foundation to peace.

Today, there are many Karen organizations based on affairs of the Karen people, which are striving for rights of the Karen people. In relation to the current political development, these Karen organizations can no longer remain in isolation and strive for the interest of the Karen people. It is necessary for all the Karen organizations to establish unity within the Karen people and cooperate together, with understanding, for the interest of the Karen people. Likewise, it is necessary for all the ethnic nationality organizations to establish unity among themselves and endeavor cooperatively for achievement of the just rights of the ethnic nationalities and peace in the country.

On this occasion of honoring and celebrating the Karen New Year's Day, let us all pledge to unite and endeavor, starting from this day and forever in the future, to spread the fact that the Karen people are a vigorous and developing nationality, by maintaining, protecting and caring for the Karen people's characteristics, dignity and progress. We urge and wish you all to enjoy the benefits of development resulting from peace in the Union, based on unity, and recognize the differences and characteristics of diverse nationalities, inhabiting this country, and the rights of each nationality.

Pyatho Waxing Moon 1, 2753 K. E.
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