



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The [Karen Human Rights Group](#) would like to call your attention to human rights violations that have resulted from the ongoing government military presence throughout Southeast Myanmar.

The Karen Human Rights Group has documented human rights abuses in Southeast Myanmar since 1992. We maintain a team of dozens of local community members trained in human rights documentation. Twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, most recently KHRG was the recipient of the 2013 Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award from the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy.

Reports from our researchers have demonstrated that, despite the ceasefire signed between the Myanmar Government and the Karen National Union in January 2012, the Tatmadaw maintains a substantial and growing presence in KHRG's operations areas. This presence leads to violations of the human rights of rural villagers, and weakens the prospects for a durable and sustainable peace. The recent killing of the journalist Par Gyi by Government forces is only the latest example. Given the public commitments by Thein Sein to peace in ethnic areas, there should not be any barriers to the reduction of the presence of Tatmadaw and Border Guard Forces in Southeast Myanmar.

Tatmadaw and government Border Guard Forces continue to [abuse villagers with impunity](#) in Southeast Myanmar. Soldiers have assaulted, killed and sexually assaulted civilians in recent months. Other forms of abuse rely on the power dynamics that remain after years of assaults on civilians to conscript civilians into labor or impose arbitrary taxes or demands on them. KHRG has also received multiple credible reports of involvement in the drug trade by BGF soldiers, including reports of drug-related murders perpetrated by these government affiliated troops.

KHRG researchers have interviewed numerous villagers from throughout Southeast Myanmar who doubt the peace process because of the ongoing movement of military material, [building of military camps](#) and other assertions of presence by government military actors. We urge you to demand that the Myanmar Government:

- Refrain from building new camps or reinforcing existing camps in civilian areas
- Remove its troops from civilian areas, beginning immediately
- Investigate and, where appropriate, prosecute soldiers accused of human rights abuses against civilians

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Saw Way Lay', with a small arrow pointing to the right.

Saw Way Lay
Advocacy Coordinator