OFFICE OF THE SUPREME HEADQUARTER
KAREN NATIONAL UNION
KAWTHOOLEI

KNU Statement Condemning Election-Related Violence in Burma's Border Areas

10th November 2010

We, the Karen National Union (KNU), strongly condemn recent attacks by Burma's military regime, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), on Myawaddy Town and several other locations in Burma's border areas, where at least 3 civilians were killed, and more injured. These latest attacks are part of the SPDC's systematic violence against Burma's ethnic peoples.

The conflict in Myawaddy began on 7 November, the day of Burma's first elections in 20 years, when civilians complained of being threatened and intimidated to vote for the junta-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), rather than the local Karen party which was their preference. Brigade-5 of the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) led by Colonel Saw Lah Bwe – who refused to transform to the Border Guard Force under the control of SPDC Army – took control of Myawaddy to protect these people, without using weapons. Col Saw Lah Bwe had said that he expected the SPDC Army to enter into negotiation to resolve the situation.

However, on Monday, the 8th of November 2010, at 9 a.m., the SPDC Army responded with machine guns and rocket propelled grenades, despite the presence of many civilians in the town. As a result, more than 25,000 civilians fled across the border into Thailand. This is in addition to the estimated 500,000 people already displaced internally due to SPDC Army attacks. These attacks are all part of the SPDC's policy of eliminating ethnic opposition, including ceasefire groups that have refused to be under its direct control as a Border Guard Force, as required by their 2008 Constitution.

The SPDC has accused the KNU of carrying out these attacks. However, the KNU and DKBA Brigade-5 share the same policy not to hurt civilians but to protect them. The KNU supports the DKBA's actions as they were taken in resistance to the SPDC's elections that do not represent any progress towards creating a democratic federal union in which the ethnic people's fundamental human rights would be protected. Instead, the regime's elections have created more conflicts, instability and caused further suffering of our ethnic peoples.

We have repeatedly warned that these elections will not solve the human rights and humanitarian crises in Burma, but instead result in continued or increased repression and instability, and attacks on ethnic peoples will continue.

We, the KNU, earnestly urge the United Nations, the E U, and other international communities to reject the result of Burma's sham elections and apply real pressure on the regime to stop the attacks on ethnic civilians, and follow the demands of the United Nations to engage with all stake holders in tripartite dialogue for the resolution of all political problems.

Supreme Headquarters
Karen national Union