



World Kachin Congress deplores unjust sentencing of Kachin civil society leaders, calls for sanctions against the real criminals – the Burma Army

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The World Kachin Congress strongly condemns the heinous sentencing of three Kachin civil society leaders to six months in prison and a fine of 500,000 kyat each for defamation of the Burma Army under Article 500 of the Panel Law.

Ms Nang Pu, Mr Lum Zawng, and Mr Zau Jat had committed no crime. They simply organized peaceful gatherings to call for the Burma Army to stop blocking Kachin IDPs from accessing safe refuge and humanitarian aid earlier this year.

Ironically, it is the Burma Army who inflicted war crimes and crime against innocent unarmed civilians – deliberately trapping the IDPs, using them as human shields, and for multiple other war crimes. Countless cases of maligned activities are documented by human rights communities across the globe and also underscored in UN’s Independent International Fact Finding Mission recent report.

The Burma Army is the primary purveyor of violence and only underwriter of atrocities in ethnic states for over 5 decades. They are flaunting their impunity and power over the justice system by exacting unjust sentencing, intimidating anyone daring to speak out against their crimes. Meanwhile, they are continuing their attacks and maligned activities on our Kachin territories, displacing indigenous people, and seizing our lands and natural resources – all during the so-called “peace process.”

This latest travesty of justice must be a wake-up call to the international community that we can not afford to carry sentiment of “business as usual” with the Burmese government, and we must be united in our response by imposing targeted sanctions against crude individuals and global embargo on arm sales to brutal Burmese military, travel ban against perpetrators of war crimes.

Pressure must be exerted – not only for the immediate release of the three unjustly sentenced -- but for judicial reform, and for the Burma Army to be brought under civilian control. A nationwide unilateral ceasefire must be declared and Burma Army troops be withdrawn from ethnic areas so that inclusive political negotiations towards a new federal democratic constitution can begin.

We call on all supporter of democracy to condemn the sentencing and demand measures that would allow activist to perform peaceful democratic activities without fear of persecution or retribution.

Media Contacts:

Mrs. Moon Nay Li (Thailand).
Phone: +66 85 523 3791.

Mrs. Marip Seng Bu (Japan)
Phone: +81 904 076 6579.

Mr. Nsang Gum San (USA)
Phone: +1 443-415-8683