



Jan 9th, 2013

President Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW; Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

The Kachin Alliance, representing the Kachin community in the United States, wish to bring to your attention, the great concern we have regarding the worsening war situation in our former homeland, the Kachin area in northern Burma.

Less than 2 months after your historic visit to the country, the Burma Army under President Thein Sein, has stepped up its assault on the Kachin Independence Organization/Army (KIO/KIA) - coordinating heavy artillery fire on the ground with aerial attacks by fighter jets and helicopter gunships. Ironically the offensive escalated on December 14, just one day after the government offered a new round of peace talks.

Since then, in an all out effort to capture the KIO administration center of Laiza, the Burma army has incessantly bombarded KIA and civilian areas with 81mm, 105mm and 120mm mortar shells killing and injuring several innocent citizens. Burma army fighter jets and helicopter gunships have also carried out attacks using Chinese airspace. It is doubtful the outmanned and outgunned Kachin will be able to hold off the military might of the Burmese army for long. For us Kachins, the implications for the fall of Laiza, is too terrible to contemplate.

More importantly, our grief is even bigger for the suffering of our kinsmen in the hand of their own government. The fact that a series of mortar shells are falling daily in the vicinity of camps where the majority of an estimated 100,000 civilians internally displaced by the conflict are taking refuge, is causing widespread panic and fear to an already traumatized camp population. These are innocent civilians who have suffered untold miseries at the hands of their own government's army, denied humanitarian emergency aid by their own government, and will no doubt bear the brunt of its brutality if Laiza were to fall.

Since the escalated assault on the Kachin, various ethnic and civil society groups and peace activists have made appeals to the Thein Sein government to put an end to this civil war and seek a peaceful resolution. The international community has also called for restraint, but the ground and aerial bombardments continue unabated. It appears the Burmese government, aided and abetted by the Chinese, is seeking a military solution rather than a political one.

On the matter of peace negotiations, what our Kachin brethren in Burma are striving for is a genuine peace process that will restore their guaranteed rights as co-founders of the Union of Burma. They are convinced that the means to a just and sustainable peace is through meaningful political dialogue. President Thein Sein's government, on the other hand, refuses to engage in any serious political dialogue, pushing for untenable ceasefires instead.

Since the root of Burma's most pressing problems is the failure of successive majority-Myanmar governments to address the needs and aspirations of its non-Myanmar ethnic peoples, President Thein Sein and his government's efforts to resolve the Kachin issue by military means will only make real peace harder to achieve in the long run.

The Thein Sein government bears direct responsibility for the brutality of the army against its own people, the Kachin. He has seriously undermined his own credibility when his office came out with outright lies in responding to the escalated Kachin war. Also, during his US visit in September, despite mounting credible evidence, he denied that the Myanmar army has committed serious human rights abuses in ethnic areas. He has made a mockery of international accolades as a 'reformist' by displaying a duplicitous strategy of offering peace while unleashing weapons of war at the same time.

Therefore, we US Kachins urge your administration to reassess its policy of improving relations with a brutal and duplicitous regime that would rather harm its own people in order to protect Chinese interests.

We therefore appeal to you to use all the powers vested in you as our President to:

- condemn the Burma Army's aerial and artillery bombardment of the Kachin people.
- demand an immediate withdrawal of Burmese troops from Kachin areas.
- reassess economic and diplomatic ties with Burma and consider reinstating a trade embargo.
- reconsider military-military ties with Burma including Burmese army's participation in Cobra Gold military exercise
- urge the Burmese government to initiate genuine political dialogue
- provide a framework whereby such a dialogue can take place
- call for the Burmese government to open aid to ALL victims of this conflict

Sincerely,

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