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Women's League of Burma

Statement by the Women's League of Burma
A non-inclusive Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement will not bring peace

October 13, 2015

The Women's League of Burma (WLB) is gravely concerned that the government's planned signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) on October 15 with only eight armed groups will not lead to peace, but to an escalation of conflict.

In the past week, even after the announcement of the signing, Naypyidaw has sent in massive troop reinforcements and launched new offensives in Kachin and northern Shan State, with serious human rights abuses inflicted on civilians. This has led to fresh displacement, adding to the over 200,000 already displaced in northern Burma.

Camps for internally displaced in northern Burma are already facing critical humanitarian shortages due to Naypyidaw's restrictions on access, and funding cuts from international donors. New displacement is placing further burdens on the camps, with women and children bearing the brunt of the hardship.

WLB fears that the NCA signing will lead to further funding cuts for displaced populations throughout the country, and possibly forced return, as the international community strengthens its support for Naypyidaw.

"We do not trust Naypyidaw's peace process. It's clearly just a game to divide the ethnic groups, while continuing to attack them," said WLB spokesperson Naw Wahkushee.

WLB is also concerned at Naypyidaw's failure to ensure women's participation in the peace process. Ethnic armed groups agreed at the Lawkheelar summit last June to amend the NCA text to guarantee a quota of at least 30% women in future political dialogue. However, Napyidaw has refused to amend the text, which states that only an "appropriate" proportion of women take part in political dialogue. This vague, subjective wording provides no guarantee of meaningful women's participation, and directly contradicts the government's claims to be implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

"The NCA is not only non-inclusive for the ethnic groups, it's also non-inclusive of women," said Naw Wahkushee

Worryingly, despite Naypyidaw's divisive, non-inclusive approach, the draft NCA text was already welcomed in March this year by the United Nations Special Envoy Vijay Nambiar and other foreign diplomats in Yangon.

To build genuine peace, WLB urges international donors to stop prioritizing their relations with Naypyidaw over the interests of women and children in ethnic conflict zones. Donors should review their unconditional support for Naypyidaw's "peace process," and start exerting pressure on Napyidaw to immediately end its military offensives and systematic abuses, and begin troop withdrawal from the ethnic areas as a prelude to political dialogue.

Contact persons:

Naw Wahkushee : +66 86 118 2261 (English and Karen Language)

Navebon : +66 81 030 6370 (Burmese Language)