

19 January, 2016

Statement on the Unresolved Year-Long Case of the Two Female Teachers of Kawngghka

Maran Lu Ra (age 20) and Tangbau Hkwan Nan Tsin (age 21) started working as Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) volunteer teachers in Kawngghka Village, Muse Township, Northern Shan State, in June 2014. While working in the village, on 19 January, 2015, they were gang-raped, inhumanly tortured and brutally murdered with multiple stab wounds in their home inside the village churchyard. Today, 19 January, 2016, is exactly one year since the incident.

Kawngghka Village has only 28 households and is situated in government-controlled territory. No government troops, ethnic armed groups or militia groups were based there. On the fateful day of 19 January, 2015, about 50 government troops from the Kyaukme-based Light Infantry Battalion 503 arrived and took up positions in the village. The government troops temporarily resided at four houses in the village. The house where the crime occurred was about 100 yards away from the four houses temporarily taken up by the army but well inside its 200-yard security perimeter.

To find out the truth about the two female teachers' case, KBC formed a committee to conduct investigations. When KBC asked the President to officially recognize the 15-member committee and acknowledge its power and mandate, President Office Minister, U Aung Min, accepted its cooperation.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID), Lashio Police Force and Muse Police Force are undertaking the investigation regarding the case. However, many flaws were found in the police work following the case. In particular, the police did not arrange for the forensic doctor to do a post-mortem examination of the two teachers' corpses. Additionally, they did not systematically collect evidence in accordance with the established procedures. They also violated the Code of Criminal Procedure when sending evidence to relevant departments. Moreover, when the KBC Investigation Team asked the police about the evidence, the latter gave two differing answers. They first answered that they had sent the evidence to the lab but next time they replied that the evidence had been damaged or lost. Though the evidence could have been utilized by the testing them in the lab to discover the true culprit, no findings have come out till this day.

In addition, all testimonies and findings obtained by the police have to be submitted to the Tactical Operations Commander, Col. Htun Naing Oo, but the army prevented villagers from taking photos and records of the crime scene, also destroying already documented information. Instead of finding out the truth, the police even accused the KBC Investigation Team of poor cooperation. Currently, the police are trying to pin the crime on two young Kachin men from Kawngghka Village.

Although the crime occurred exactly one year ago, no real culprit has been found. Hence, truth and justice remain elusive for the two teachers and their remaining families.

Since this horrendous crime happened, many such cases of sexual assault, torture and murder of women have continued in ethnic regions in the proceeding year.

For instance:

- (1) On 20 January, 2015, a soldier from Light Infantry Division 77 committed sexual abuse and near-death torture on a 30-year old woman in Khu Maw Village, Khu Phyat Tract, Namtu Township, Northern Shan State.¹
- (2) On 13 April, 2015, Private Zaw Myo Aye (military ID-T/454138) of government army Light Infantry Battalion 438 attempted to commit sexual assault upon a 73-year old local elderly woman in Namlan Village, Momauk Township, Bhamo District. Villagers were able to catch him red-handed but the military tribunal only tried him for night-time trespassing.²
- (3) On 6 June, 2015, a 28-year old Shan woman was found raped, robbed and killed near a building where soldiers from Infantry Battalion 249 were stationed in Hopong Township, Southern Shan State. After the incident, army officers arrived at the scene along with a private and beat him in public view, also announcing that he would be sentenced to death. The Commander of the Eastern Command, Brig. Gen. Aye Win himself came from Taunggyi, and gave money and food to the murdered woman's husband.³

Inability to find the true culprits in such a dreadful case of the two teachers from Kawngghka Village, as well as continued occurrences of similar offences results in terrible concern for women, especially for the life and security of ethnic women living in armed conflict areas and ethnic regions where rule of law is weak. In effect, it is also encourages further abuses in all places and emboldens perpetrators to commit crimes again and again. In such a time as this of striving for peace by all means, guaranteeing women's lives and security is the utmost requirement. Otherwise, achieving genuine peace and lasting national reconciliation will still be far away.

Therefore, we civil society organizations call for prompt execution of the following demands:

- (1) To sanction an official mandate and power of investigation to KBC in order to reveal the truth of the two Kawngghka teachers;
- (2) To request and invite the International Humanitarian Fact-Finding Commission (IHFFC) to conduct an investigation in order to find out the truth;
- (3) For the incoming NLD government to promptly execute the two aforementioned points.

Signed by:

1. Legal Aid Network (LAN)
2. Kachin Women's Association - Thailand (KWAT)
3. Women's League of Burma (WLB)

¹ <http://kachinlandnews.com/?p=25319> and <http://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-investigate-alleged-rape-and-killing-two-kachin-women>

² <http://www.dvb.no/news/soldier-sentenced-in-attempted-rape-case-burma-myanmar/54717>

³ <http://shanhumanrights.org/index.php/news-updates?start=18>

4. Burma Partnership (BP)
5. Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)
6. Karen Women's Organization (KWO)
7. Kachin National Organization (KNO)
8. Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)
9. Pan Kachin Development Society (PKDS)
10. School for Shan State Nationality Youth (SSSNY)
11. Kachin Youth Organization (KYO)
12. Kachin Women's Association (KWA)
13. Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC)
14. Lahu Women's Organization (LWO)
15. Ethnic Voices
16. Eastern Naga Development Organization (ENDO)
17. Bridging Real Integrated Development Grass Empowerment (BRIDGE)
18. Kachin Relief and Development Committee (KRDC)
19. Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG)
20. Network for Human Rights Documentation - Burma (ND-Burma)
21. Chin Agency
22. Kale Pax Network
23. Asia Justice and Rights (AJAR)
24. Civil Authorize Negotiate Organization (C.A.N-Org)
25. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays - Myanmar (PFLAG-MYANMAR)
26. Women Initiatives Platform (Taunggyi)
27. Network for Democracy and Development (NDD)
28. Forum for Democracy in Burma (FDB)
29. Action Committee for Democracy Development (ACDD)
30. Students and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB)
31. Tavoyan Youth Organization (TYO)
32. Tavoyan Women's Union (TWU)
33. Pyi Gyi Khin (ပြည်ကြီးခင်)
34. Gender Equality Network (GEN)
35. Akhaya (အခရာ)
36. Colors Rainbow
37. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters (HRDP)
38. United ACT
39. Human Rights Educators Network (HREN)
40. Tenasserim River and Indigenous People Network (TRIP NET)
41. Public Legal Aid Network (PLAN)
42. Dawei Brobono Lawyer Network (DBLN)
43. Karenni Refugee Committee (KnRC)
44. Upper Myanmar Lawyers Network

45. Mandalay Peacekeeping Committee
46. Karenni National Women's Organization (KNWO)
47. Karen Women Empowerment Group (KWEG)
48. Palaung Women's Organization (PWO)
49. Pa-O Youth Organization
50. All Arakan Students' and Youths' Congress (AASYC)
51. Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF)
52. Myanmar LGBT Rights Network
53. Gold Star SHG (Mandalay)
54. Try SHG (Mandalay)
55. အလင်းမီးအိမ် (လားရှိုး)
56. အမြစ်ခင်းချစ်သူ (မိုးကောင်း)
57. မနောပန်း (မြစ်ကြီးနား)
58. မိုးကြိုး (မလှိုင်)
59. Sky Dragon (ပြည်)
60. စေတနာ့ အားမာန် (ပဲခူး)
61. ဧရာဝတီနုလုံးသား (ပုသိမ်)
62. Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO)
63. Women's Rights and Welfare Association of Burma (WRWAB)
64. Burmese Women's Union (BWU)
65. Kayan Women's Organization (KyWO)
66. Rakhaing Women's Union (RWU)
67. Colorful Girls
68. Kachin Peace Network (KPN)
69. Kachin Women Peace Network (KWPN)
70. Center for Youth and Social Harmony (CYSH)
71. N' Center for Education & Research Development (NCERD)
72. Shan Youth Yangon (SYU)
73. Freethinkers
74. The Seagull: Human Rights, Peace and Development
75. Co-Exist
76. Myanmar Youth Social and Education Local Focus (MYSELF)
77. ပန်းပျိုးလက်လှူငယ်စင်တာ
78. ကဗျာချစ်သူများ အသင်း
79. ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးရှိတ်သံ
80. ဂရုဏာရောင်စဉ်တန်းများ
81. Peace Machine
82. Independent Youth For Change (IYFC)

83. MasterPeace Myanmar Club
84. Golden Generations
85. Renovator Youth Network
86. Women's Initiative Network for Peace (WIN-Peace)
87. Association of Myanmar Disabled Women Affairs (AMDWA)
88. Postmodern Informal Education (Banmauk) (နိစ္စဓူဝပညာရေးအဖွဲ့-တန်းမော်မြို့)
89. Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma)
90. Equality Myanmar
91. Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)
92. Ramhkye
93. Mungchying Rawt Jat (MRJ)
94. Burma Rivers Network (BRN)
95. Farmers and Landworkers' Union (Myanmar)
96. Ethnic Community Development Forum (Burma)
97. Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization (SSEO)
98. Kachin Canadian Association
99. Karen Affairs Committee (KAC)
100. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP)
101. People's Network for Constitutional Reform (PNCR)
102. National Network for Education Reform-Yangon (NNER)
103. Kachin Women Union (KWU)

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