

Civil Society Organisations Call for Dialogue and Urgent International Engagement to Support Non-Military Solutions in Northern Myanmar

As civil society working for peace and development in Myanmar, we write to express our grave concern over the rapidly deteriorating situation in Northern Myanmar, especially in Kachin State, where recent fighting threatens to escalate into a full-scale conflict with critical consequences. Sparked in part by increased tensions due to large-scale infrastructure development in the area, fighting erupted on June 9 and has already led to thousands of refugees fleeing the area and the threat of renewed all out fighting.

This dire situation not only directly affects the people of Kachin and Northern Shan States, but could also have an enduring negative effect on the process of reform and transition that has emerged from the November 2010 elections. It threatens to set the country back to the power structures of military rule from before the convening of the central and regional parliaments.

In this remote and highly isolated area, the situation is evolving rapidly. There is a deep concern that the current crisis will develop into larger scale violence and eruption of open fighting between the Myanmar government and the Kachin Independence Army for the first time since signing of a cease-fire agreement in 1994.

As civil society organizations working for development, justice, peace and equity, and with many years accompanying the peoples of Myanmar:

- We call on Myanmar military forces and the Kachin Independence Army to engage in immediate negotiations aimed at establishing and implementing a ceasefire agreement.
- We call on the Government of Myanmar to urgently implement a process of dialogue and national reconciliation with all of Myanmar's ethnic armed groups in line with the President's Thein Sein's March inaugural address to Parliament that stated that the door for peace is open.
- We welcome China's efforts to calm the situation and to consider its ongoing possibility for mediation in conflict. We request China to allow civilians to seek refuge in its territory and allow for safe, voluntary return.
- We call on the Government of China and the China Power Investment Corporation and all of its subcontractors to cease its construction of the Myitsone dam project that is located in the heartland of Kachin cultural and historical sites.
- We encourage ASEAN to explore its own role in supporting dialogue and reconciliation efforts in Myanmar. Other countries in the region have the ability to offer technical

support to the Government of Myanmar based on their own experience in engagement with non-state armed actors. Also, within members of ASEAN, there is growing expertise in the areas of mediation and facilitation based support to other armed conflicts in the region.

- We call on members of ASEAN to ensure that protection of civilians and a commitment to peaceful settlement of disputes is clearly articulated in connection with the ASEAN chairmanship in 2014.
- We urge the UN Secretary General to make use of his good offices mandate, as outlined by the General Assembly, to promote dialogue leading to an immediate cessation of hostilities and establishment of a long-term process for national reconciliation.

These actions should be implemented without delay to prevent further loss of life and displacement of people and livelihoods. We believe the People's Republic of China, the Association of South East Asian Nations and the United Nations can further support the Government of Myanmar in laying the foundation for long-term durable peace and harmonious relations in Asia.

Fiona Dove
Director
Transnational Institute
Amsterdam, Netherlands

Patricia DeBoer
Regional Director for Asia Programs
American Friends Service Committee
Philadelphia, USA

Emma Leslie
Director
Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Andrew Tomlinson,
UN Representative and Director
Quaker UN Office
New York, USA

Klaus Fritsche
Director
German Asia Foundation (Asia House)
Essen, Germany

Saskia Kunst
Director ad-interim
Burma Centre Netherlands
Amsterdam, Netherlands

Gus Miclat
Executive Director
Initiatives for International Dialogues
Manila/Davao, Philippines

For correspondence with the signatories of this letter please contact:

ASIA - Emma Leslie (emmacambodia@gmail.com)
EUROPE – Saskia Kunst (saskia@burmacentrum.nl)
UN/USA – Sarah Clarke (SClarke@afsc.org)