



**OFFICE OF THE SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
KAREN NATIONAL UNION
KAWTHOOLEI**

Karen National Union Statement on 2010 Elections

April 26, 2009

1. Defying the requests of the United Nations and democratic forces in Burma, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) is pushing ahead with elections in 2010.
2. Internal repression is at an all time high.
 - Burmese Army attacks against ethnic civilians continue.
 - There are more political prisoners than at any time for 20 years.
 - All media is censored.
 - There is no right of freedom of assembly.
 - There is no right of freedom of speech.
 - Political parties cannot be formed without permission from the SPDC.
 - Existing political parties supporting human rights and democracy are severely restricted, and members who are not in jail face regular harassment.
 - Other political parties, especially ethnic political parties, such as the Karen National Union, are banned.
 - Daw Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest.
 - There is no election law.

In these circumstances, it is impossible for elections to be free and fair.

3. Even if free and fair elections could be held, the elections would not bring about any change in Burma. This is because the constitution enshrines military rule into the law governing Burma.
4. The principles of the constitution were written by delegates that were not representative of the people of Burma, and were instead hand-picked by the SPDC. During the process, the SPDC drafted every word, and rejected every proposal for change.
5. The constitution was approved by a rigged referendum. Aside from any "vote no" campaign being banned, abuses included denying aid to our Karen people in the Delta after cyclone Nargis, unless they agreed to vote "yes", forcing people to sign the forms without voting, and forcing people to vote "yes" against their will.
6. The constitution would go against all democratic norms, including:
 - The Head of State must be from the military
 - The Army is not answerable to the government or Parliament.
 - The Army has veto power over all laws passed by the Parliament.
 - No basic rights are guaranteed by the constitution.
 - All existing repressive laws will remain in place. There will be no freedom of speech, no freedom of assembly, no free media, and no open democratic debate. No prisoners will be released.
7. The constitution grants no ethnic rights, no autonomy, and provides no protection or promotion of Burma's many cultures, including Karen culture.

8. It is incorrect to state this could be a step on a path to reform. No change of the constitution can be made without 75 percent approval of parliament. As the SPDC will have a minimum of 25 percent of seats in Parliament, they can block any reform. Even if Parliament did vote for change, the army can veto the change on grounds of national security.
9. There will be no democratic space opened up by having a Parliament. The military parties and their allies will dominate the Parliament, and the military parties will decide the agenda of the Parliament. Media remains censored so there will not be any open political debate in media. Those naive enough to argue that there will be political space in the Parliament should look at the National Convention, which will no doubt be used as model by the SPDC. At the National Convention no free debate or discussion was allowed. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights in Burma described the delegates as being under virtual house arrest. Delegates were even told what to eat, and when to take a bath.
10. Regardless of the Parliament, the civil service and economy of Burma has been militarised. Military personnel, their families, or their allies, control the ministries and all key sectors of the economy. They are responsible for the day to day running of the country, and there will be no change in this sphere.
11. Attacks against ethnic people will continue. There is no reason to think that the current military attacks against ethnic people in Eastern Burma, which the United Nations has described as breaking the Geneva Conventions, will end.
12. It is clear that the elections and constitution will not bring about peace, democracy, human rights and stability to Burma. Rather, oppression will continue.
13. In fact, by not addressing demands for freedom, democracy, or granting any ethnic rights, resistance will continue, destabilising the country as long as dictatorship, in whatever guise, exists. Further, the failure to grant any ethnic rights, and pressure on some ethnic ceasefire organisations to disarm, could lead to division within them, and some may split or return to armed struggle.
14. Only true democracy, basic human rights, including equality for ethnic people, will bring peace and stability to Burma. We therefore call on the international community to work for these goals, rather than accept the fraud being perpetrated by the SPDC.
15. We are disappointed that Gambari appears to have endorsed the SPDC's 2010 elections and constitution, even offering UN assistance with the organisation and monitoring of the elections. He is advocating a path promoted by the regime, rather than acting as an impartial facilitator for tri-partite dialogue, which is his mandate.
16. We call on SPDC to follow the demands of the United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Security Council, European Union, USA, and others and engage in genuine tripartite dialogue leading to genuine change in our country.
17. We call on governments around the world not to endorse the 2010 elections and instead redouble efforts to persuade the SPDC to enter into genuine tri-partite dialogue.
18. The Karen National Union is a democratic organisation, committed to human rights and democracy in Burma. We are working for a peaceful, stable, federal Burma. We stand ready to enter into genuine tripartite dialogue, as facilitated by the United Nations, at any time.

**The Executive Committee
Karen National Union**