

JOINT STATEMENT



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AN URGENT APPEAL TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND

FOR EXTENDING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO
KAREN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES SEEKING
PROTECTION IN THE
THAI-MYANMAR BORDER





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Since the 1 February military coup and the declaration of the long state of emergency in Myanmar, over 600 people including Indigenous Peoples have been killed by the Myanmar Military in violent and systematic crackdowns on peaceful pro-democracy protests. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar has said the military junta's violence against peaceful protestors could amount to crimes against humanity.¹ A number of countries including the US, UK and European Union have condemned and accused the military as the 'reign of terror'.²

Further, the recent intensification of armed conflict because of offensive military campaigns by the Myanmar military against the Karen National Union (KNU) and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) has led to drastic increase in loss of lives and displacement of civilians. Following the indiscriminate aerial bombing mainly in areas inhabited by the Karens, reportedly, thousands of civilians including women, children, youths and Indigenous Peoples are fleeing their homes to the border areas of Thailand to escape the onslaught of the Myanmar army.

With nowhere to run, many have crossed, and several others are still attempting to flee by crossing the Salween River along the Thai - Myanmar border. On the 3rd of April 2021, the Native Tribal Sector for Justice and Peace, Chiang Mai, Thailand along with 9 (nine) civil society organisations issued a statement³ calling on Thai authorities to extend support to the helpless victims of Myanmar who are seeking refuge in Thailand on humanitarian grounds and to allow civil society organisations to deliver aid.

Over the past week, many villagers, including, women, pregnant women, children, and elderly people have been hiding in the forests and seeking rescue. We appreciate that Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has announced that the Thai government will extend support to those seeking refuge in Thailand and stating that the problem must be solved systematically.⁴

In this context, we appeal to the Government of Thailand that it approaches the issue in accordance with the international human rights standards, in particular the 1951 Refugee Convention. We further appeal that humanitarian assistance and temporary shelter to the victims be scaled-up and made fully operational with the support of international community, including governments, humanitarian organizations and UN agencies, and civil society organizations in a transparent and an inclusive manner.

In this regard, we appeal to the Government of Thailand to:

- Immediately facilitate and coordinate humanitarian assistance for the victims, including food, medical aid, shelter and clothing, with UN and other international agencies and governments, and civil society organizations;
- Designate a government agency with a clear mandate and guideline to coordinate the relief work and humanitarian assistance with both state and non-state actors to facilitate a systematic approach to effectively deliver the aid to the victims; and
- Respect international humanitarian and human rights norms and standards during wartime and conflict and guarantee non-refoulement of victims of conflict and persecution in their own country.



Signatories:

1. Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (NIPT)
2. Indigenous Women's Network of Thailand (IWNT)
3. Indigenous Youths Network of Thailand (TONKLA)
4. Karen Network for Culture and Environment (KNCE)
5. Indigenous Foundation for Education and Culture (IPF)
6. Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) Foundation
7. Highland Environmental Management Network
8. Karen Network for Culture and Environment (West Region)
9. Inter-Mountain Peoples Organisation and Culture in Thailand (IMPECT)
10. Hmong Association for Development in Thailand (MDT)
11. Indigenous Media Network (IMN)
12. Manushya Foundation
13. Earth- Rights International
14. Cross Cultural Foundation
15. Forum Asia
16. MAP Foundation
17. Indigenous Peoples' Human Rights Defenders' Network, Thailand
18. BEAM Education Foundation
19. Legal Status Network Foundation
20. Development Center for Children and Community Network
21. Karen Peace Support Network
22. Northern Development Foundation (NDF)
23. People movement for a fair society (P- Move)

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- 1 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Myanmar junta crackdown likely crimes against humanity requiring coordinated international response - UN expert (11 March 2021)*, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26885&LangID=E>
 - 2 BBC News, *Myanmar coup: What is happening and why? (1 April 2021)*, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55902070>
 - 3 Indigenous Media Network (IMN), *Civil society organisations calling on Thai authorities to extend support to the people of Myanmar seeking refugee in Thailand (3 April 2021)*, available at: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=351546919600099>
 - 4 Bangkok Post, *PM insists Thailand has helped Myanmar refugees (8 April 2021)*, available at: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/2096599/pm-insists-thailand-has-helped-myanmar-refugees>

