

## KHRG tribute to Saw Oh Moo



Photo: Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)

The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) continues to mourn the tragic loss of Saw Oh Moo, a committed human rights defender, community leader, and peace advocate. On 5 April 2018, Saw Oh Moo was shot and killed by the Tatmadaw on his way home from a meeting to organize humanitarian assistance for the villagers who have been displaced from ongoing clashes in Ler Mu Plaw, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District. Since the fighting began on March 4th, over 2,400 villagers have been forced to flee their homes.

Saw Oh Moo is survived by his wife, Naw Paw Tha, and 7 young children, who were forced to flee the Burma Army's first attacks in Ler Mu Plaw on

March 4th. Saw Oh Moo could have followed his wife and children into hiding in the forest, but he chose to remain at his home in Ler Mu Plaw to protect his people from the attacking Burma Army soldiers.

In the wake of her husband's death, Saw Oh Moo's widow is facing livelihood challenges as she has seven children to support on her own. In a recent interview, Saw Oh Moo's widow told KHRG, *"Now, I am facing many problems in every part of my life. I have to work to secure my family's livelihood and look after my seven children...I am currently displaced in the forest because of the Tatmadaw activities so the biggest problem that I am facing now is food and health problems."*

To this day, Saw Oh Moo's family has been unable to retrieve his body as Burma Army soldiers shoot at anyone who approaches the area. As a result, Saw Oh Moo's family has not been able to perform their Indigenous funeral rites. Saw Oh Moo's widow told KHRG, *"I am disheartened that I cannot see my husband's body because the P'Yaw [Tatmadaw] are hiding it. I want to hold his funeral according to our Karen traditions and as our animist beliefs teach us."*

Saw Oh Moo's death is another casualty of ongoing fighting between the Burma Army and the Karen National Liberation Army, but his commitment to building peace and protecting the ancestral lands of his people will never be forgotten. Saw Oh Moo's legacy lives on through the hearts and minds of all of the people Saw Oh Moo fought to protect, those who stood alongside him, and those who will continue to fight for the human rights of all Karen people in Burma.

We at KHRG intend to honor Saw Oh Moo's legacy by projecting the voices of villagers in Mu Traw District and calling on the Government of Myanmar to take immediate action to cease the ongoing Tatmadaw offensive in Mu Traw and guarantee the safe return of Karen refugees and IDPs to their homelands. We demand the Myanmar government ensure the Burma Army uphold the military code of conduct established under the NCA and identify the perpetrators responsible for the death of Saw Oh Moo and bring them to justice.