



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

International Day of Peace

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On Monday, September 21, the world commemorates the International Day of Peace. This annual event was created by a resolution of the UN General Assembly in 1981. It is a day on which armed actors across the world are expected to cease hostilities for 24 hours as a celebration of the spirit of peace and the shared hope that we will one day live in a world where conflict is resolved without resorting to violence.

This year, International Peace Day is observed in the context of a global pandemic that knows no allegiance to country or creed, but instead is enemy to us all. In light of this common foe, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has made a plea to all combatants to lay down their arms so that all of humanity can unite their focus against the Covid-19 virus. Sadly, in Myanmar and conflict torn regions around the world, that plea has gone unheeded.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, published a recent report on the situation of human rights of Myanmar's ethnic minorities in which she documents a litany of human rights violations and war crimes committed at the hands of the Tatmadaw and other armed actors aligned with the Myanmar State. Amongst these heinous acts are included attacks targeting schools and religious sites as well as the unlawful killing of civilians in areas across the country. These attacks continue despite the Government's signing of the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement that was intended to bring an end to the conflict between the Tatmadaw and the country's various ethnic armed organizations.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been used as a justification for infringing upon the human rights of the country's citizens. In certain regions, internet and communication services have been blocked, preventing civilians from accessing vital information necessary to combat the spread of the pandemic. Freedom of movement has also been restricted, causing food shortages, restrictions on health services and humanitarian crises for countless civilians.

The theme of this year's International Peace Day is "Shaping Peace Together." It is a message to all people that they play a role in contributing to peace by spreading kindness, compassion, and hope in the face of the pandemic. In Myanmar particularly, it is a reminder to all armed actors of their responsibility to bring about peace and ensure the protection of generations of innocents who have been victims of decades of conflict.

In commemoration of International Peace Day, KHRG calls on the Myanmar State, Tatmadaw and all other armed actors to observe this important event by participating in the international ceasefire that will take place on Monday, September 21. Let this Day of Peace be a moment of reflection on the countless deaths that have occurred as a result of the conflict and remember the shared responsibility of all actors in bringing about peace in Myanmar.