



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Statement regarding proceedings against Saw Tha Boe

9th March 2020

Karen Human Rights Group strongly opposes the proceedings brought against and the attempted arrest of Saw Tha Boe. This case undermines the legitimate work of activists in Myanmar and this was a blatant disregard of Saw Tha Boe's human rights.

Saw Tha Boe is a Karen environmentalist working on environmental issues in Southeast Myanmar. A case was brought against Saw Tha Boe by the Hpa-An township General Administration Department charging him with Section 505(b) of the Penal Code. On March 6th 2020, Saw Tha Boe's house was searched by the Myanmar police and local authorities. The search on his house by the police and the local authorities was unjustified and a violation of his right to privacy.

Saw Tha Boe believes that the case against him is in relation to his involvement in the prayer ceremony against the coal-powered Tan Lay Htaung cement factory in Myaing Kalay area. The coal used in the factory has polluted the water sources in the nearby villages and the impact has been detrimental to the villagers. The villagers struggle to find clean drinking water, to bathe, to harvest their paddies and to care for their animals. The Karen State government has failed to address the problem despite the urgency of the issue.

The Myanmar government continues to enact laws to undermine and diminish the work of activists across Myanmar; this is evident from the number of cases being brought against activists. Instead, the government needs to take responsibility for the damage being caused by industrial development projects that they have authorized and stop hindering the legitimate work of the environmentalists who are trying solve the problems. KHRG urges that the case against Saw Tha Boe be immediately dismissed.

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