



**KNU-Karen National Union  
Supreme Headquarter  
Kawthoolei  
[www.knuhq.org](http://www.knuhq.org)**

**Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the Karen National Resistance:  
Felicitation from Padoh Saw Kwe Htoo Win, Chair of the KNU-Karen National Union**

Date – Karen Era 2863, 6th of Thalay (late moon)  
Christ Era 2024, January 31

Dear esteemed Karen community,  
Respected comrades of the Patriot resistance,

Today marks the 75th anniversary of the Karen National Resistance Day. In the history of the Karen National, it represents the very first instance where all Karen people united in armed resistance to liberate themselves from oppression, achieve independence, equality, self-determination, and establish their own nation. On this significant day, we pay homage in respect and pride to the Karen National Leaders, soldiers, Karen people, and all citizens who sacrificed their lives, shed blood, sweat, limbs, and endured immense hardships throughout the resistance period for the sake of their country and ethnic community. We extend our wishes to the Karen national leaders, army commanders, forces, soldiers, and members of the resistance organizations, hoping for their continued strength and protection from all forms of danger. From this day forth, may Karen National leaders, soldiers, members of patriot resistance forces, and all Karen people be inspired, filled with the spirit of victory, enjoy peace, good health, prosperity, and freedom from harm.

Throughout Karen history, due to oppression, unjust treatment, restrictions, and forced grabbing across different regions and sectors, the Karen people have been compelled to migrate from place to place, enduring ongoing oppression under Chauvinism. In order to persevere as an ethnic group, we must safeguard our heritage and identity while confronting challenges through various means. Our ancestral values, passed down through generations, enable us to maintain our ethnic identity. The preservation of Karen literature, the pursuit of knowledge, and the lessons learned from our history are enlightening for the Karen people. Until we achieve the ability to stand as an independent nation with freedom and equality, and until we can assert our own methods of governance and self-determination, we will struggle to thrive and progress like other ethnic groups.

Therefore, Karen national leaders established Karen organizations to achieve the goal above. The earliest organization, Dawkalu Association (Karen National Association – KNA), was established in 1881. Subsequently, numerous other Karen organizations were formed with varying objectives, each operating within its respective sector. The Karen people expressed a strong desire for self-determination and actively pursued movements toward this end. To bolster the momentum of these movements and provide leadership, Karen representatives from across the country convened for discussions. In order to represent and guide all Karen people toward fulfilling the demands of the Karen nation, the following four Karen organizations: 1) Dawkalu Association, 2) Buddhist Karen National Association, 3) Karen Central Federation, and 4) Karen Youth Organizations, came together and established the KNU-Karen National Union on February 5, 1947.

Under the leadership of the Karen National Union, on February 11, 1948, Karen people from across the nation, totaling 400,000 individuals from various towns and cities, peacefully took to the streets to protest for their four

demands 1) give the Karen State at once, 2) give the Burmese one Kyat and the Karen one Kyat, 3) we do not want communal strife, and 4) we do not want civil war. This event marked a historic milestone in Karen history, symbolizing the first instance of unified action among the Karen people. Consequently, this day is commemorated as Karen National Day, a source of pride for all Karen who proudly acknowledge its significance.

The representatives of the Karen National Union advocated for the demands of the Karen people nationwide and engaged in discussions with the country's rulers. However, Bamar Chauvinism failed to engage with the Karen National Union leaders in a constructive manner regarding the Karen people's demands. Instead, they perceived the demands of the Karen people negatively, sought to dismantle them, fostered discord, resorted to armed force, and employed violent suppression, resulting in conflicts. Ultimately, on January 31, 1949, the Karen people, under the leadership of the Karen National Union, initiated armed resistance to pursue political representation and fulfill the demands of the Karen community.

Under the leadership of the KNU-Karen National Union and with the unwavering support of the Karen people, the Karen resistance movement began politically in 1947, and it now marks its 75th year of armed resistance. Although the demands of the Karen people have not been fully met, the Karen resistance remains steadfast with the continued support and encouragement of the Karen people, as well as collaboration across various sectors.

Throughout this 75 year resistance period, war has resulted in numerous casualties, injuries, harm, and losses. Additionally, due to brutal actions committed by the Myanmar Tatmadaw to gain military advantage during this period, Karen civilians unrelated to the conflict have lost their lives, leaving behind orphans and widows, forced to flee their villages and homes, and seek refuge worldwide to restart their lives from scratch.

Throughout the 75 years of the Karen resistance period, the Karen National Union and the Karen people have encountered numerous challenges and obstacles. Within the organization's leadership, differences in political stances, political roadmaps, and opinions have led to internal conflicts, complaints among leaders, divisions, and the labeling of each other as enemies among the Karen people, resulting in armed conflicts. As the resistance movement has aged, the difficulties and struggles faced during this period have caused some colleagues to become weary and depart from the resistance.

In accordance with the political objectives of the Karen National Union, the basic policies and procedures of the Karen resistance have been formulated. Depending on the prevailing political conditions, the leaders of the Karen National Union have devised and executed political and military plans, as well as military operations, methodically. Simultaneously, we are collaborating with other ethnic resistance organizations and political entities that share similar objectives to the Karen resistance.

The Karen resistance aims to address the Karen political issue, and leaders of the Karen National Union across generations have dedicated efforts to political negotiations. Between 2012 and 2021, the Karen National Union and several other ethnic resistance organizations collaborated on political negotiations, reaching common agreements. Through the "Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement," agreements were secured with the country's authorities to pursue ceasefire and engage in political dialogue. The objective is to halt hostilities, initiate political dialogues, and establish a democratic federal union based on the political agreements resulting from these dialogues.

The rulers of the country have not adhered to the agreements outlined in the "Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement," and the expected progress in ceasefire and political dialogues has not materialized. Over the past 10 years, efforts to address the political issue through political means have revealed a lack of willingness on the part of the ruling authorities to recognize and grant equality to ethnic organizations, as well as a lack of willingness to address the underlying political problems.

Furthermore, on February 1st, 2021, the Myanmar Tatmadaw seized state power forcefully, halting all avenues of political engagement. This forcible seizure of power by the military indicates their refusal to accept the establishment of a Federal Democratic Union. The Myanmar Tatmadaw seeks to retain the special powers granted to them by the 2008 constitution.

The Myanmar Tatmadaw's unlawful seizure of state power has shattered the democratic process, paving the way for a military dictatorship. Citizens nationwide, including government officials, public figures, and particularly young individuals, vehemently oppose the military coup and have taken to the streets in protest. Despite the peaceful nature of these protests, the military has responded with arrests, excessive force, and violent suppression, utilizing weaponry typically reserved for warfare. Protestors have been unlawfully detained, subjected to abuse, and tragically killed. Fearing for their safety, many people, including government personnel and youth, have sought refuge in areas controlled by the Karen National Union and other ethnic resistance organizations.

Following the unlawful seizure of power by the Myanmar Tatmadaw, the political landscape in Myanmar has undergone significant transformation compared to previous times. In the past, ethnic resistance organizations were the primary opponents of the ruling regime, demanding national freedom, equality, and the establishment of a federal democratic union. The political awakening of the Bamar people, government employees, and youth across the country has led to widespread resistance against military dictatorship. This resistance, both political and military, aims for a better future. People's defense forces (PDF) have emerged throughout the country, engaging in armed resistance against the military dictatorship with the goal of establishing a federal democratic union. Fighting has erupted in cities nationwide, including within the jurisdiction of the Karen National Union. The armed conflict has caused local populations to live in fear, prompting them to flee their homes and seek refuge in forests, mirroring experiences across the country.

Previously, the term "Federal" was defined by the Myanmar Tatmadaw as synonymous with "Separation," involving the forceful seizure of state power and the imposition of various military governance systems. Due to the propaganda and chauvinism propagated by the Tatmadaw, the term instilled fear even among the Bamar ethnic group. However, in recent times, the nation as a whole has come to understand and embrace a broader interpretation of the term. Beyond the Tatmadaw's definition, there is now widespread acceptance of the necessity to establish a federal democratic union. This entails dismantling the dictatorship governance system in pursuit of peace and national development.

In pursuit of the Karen resistance's objective of fostering sustainable peace, it is imperative to establish this country as a true union founded on federalism and democracy. This objective resonates with all Karen people and organizations dedicated to the Karen nationality, as well as with the entire nation and its diverse ethnic groups, encompassing the interests and aspirations of all citizens. Throughout Karen history to the present day, Karen people have endured the threats of chauvinism and dictatorship in various forms, hindering their identity and development. Presently, we are confronting a military dictatorship group perpetuating chauvinism through its governance system. Unless these ideologies are eradicated, the progress and identity of our ethnic group will remain obstructed, impeding peace and development. It is incumbent upon Karen organizations, Karen ethnic people, ethnic groups, and all citizens to dismantle chauvinism and dictatorship, enabling collective efforts towards establishing this country as a federal democratic union.

The Karen resistance embodies the collective struggle of the Karen people for their national rights. It is a cause that unites all Karen individuals, as fulfilling the demands of the Karen people is the responsibility of every member of the Karen community. The success of the Karen resistance hinges on various factors, with unity among all Karen people being paramount. Just as in 1949, unity among Karen individuals, including those associated with Karen armed organizations, is crucial for shaping the destiny of the Karen people. It is imperative that Karen people collectively determine their fate. The unity of the Karen people will ultimately determine the course of Karen destiny. The primary objective of the Karen National Union is to establish Kawthoolei with freedom, equality, and complete self-determination for the Karen people. Concurrently, the aim is to establish a federal democratic union characterized by freedom, equality, and self-determination for all states.

Today, I wish to address all relevant organizations within our country. Despite the challenges, crises, and problems faced by our nation, they not only impact us internally but also burden our neighboring countries. In the pursuit of peace and development, and for the mutual interests of both our nation and our neighbors, there is only one viable path: dismantling the dictatorship governance system and establishing a "federal democratic union." Such a union would guarantee full democracy, freedom, national equality, and self-determination for all ethnic groups and

citizens. Furthermore, I urge global and neighboring countries to support ethnic groups, citizens, and organizations across various sectors in a manner that accurately reflects the current situation and aids in resolving our nation's peace and political issues.

In conclusion, on this significant occasion of the 75th Karen Resistance Day, I extend my encouragement and aspirations towards constructing a new union founded on democratic principles. It is imperative to eradicate any remnants of dictatorship and uphold the identity of all ethnic groups and citizens, prioritizing their genuine interests. I call upon respective organizations, Karen people, other ethnic groups, and all citizens to unite, rejuvenate, and dedicate their efforts to sustain the resistance movement. Together, let us strive for peace and holistic social development for the well-being of future generations.

Thank you.