



## **KPSN PRESS RELEASE -- for immediate release**

### **On World Refugee Day it must be recognised that refugees are contributing to and striving for Genuine Peace**

(Yangon, 20th June, 2017) - *"I wish to go home when I am safe from danger. I dare to return home only where there is peace in the country. This is my life, hear my voice."* Refugee from Mae La camp.

"Refugees and IDP groups are key to the future of the peace process. A peaceful return of IDPs and refugees can only occur if there is a genuine and sustainable pathway to peace." KPSN spokesperson Saw Kyaw Zwar.

These are the messages of Karen Refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) on this **World Refugee Day**:

"Refugee and IDP return should be a part of the peace agreement with a comprehensive and clear plan for the reintegration of IDPs and refugees, which includes genuine participation of the affected populations," says one resident of the Hpla Koh IDP camp. "There should be no forced relocation of refugees."

Trust in the peace process and the process for refugee return has not been established with refugee or IDP populations. One key factor hindering trust is the expanded presence of the Burmese Military in the areas designated for refugee and IDPs return.

"There needs to be a withdrawal of 17 Burmese Army Military Camps" say residents of IDP camp Ee Tu Hta. "During the times of the 'Peace' talks, the military presence has increased from 65 to 81 camps- this has eroded our trust. Currently these camps are in our villages, farms, orchards and the roads to our homes. We refugees and IDPs need our safety and security assured – The Burmese Army needs to remove their military camps from the areas in and around our villages, then we will determine if it is safe to go home."

Other demands, such as the monitoring and upholding of the military code of conduct and the removal of all landmines are also essential steps on the pathway to peace. Without these assurances refugees and IDPs will not feel that their safety is being guaranteed. Moreover, food and support for them are being gradually reduced and will cease- putting them under intense pressure to return even though it will have adverse impacts on them.

The demands of IDPs and refugees cannot be ignored as they are people directly affected by the conflict- it is essential to hear their voice and respect their dignity in this process. "Refugees and Internally Displaced people should be included in decisions and the returning process should meet our expectations," says a resident of Ee Tu Hta IDP camp, adding "there must be no discrimination against internally displaced people and refugees who will be returning to their homeland."

Ultimately their demand is for the end to the civil war, and a sustainable and lasting peace. Refugees and IDPs must be heard to ensure that they will play a role in a peaceful future for Burma.

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