



Statement by the Karen Peace Support Network

11 August 2020

KPSN condemns lack of transparency in Naw Mu Naw's murder trial, supports Mutraw and Kler Lwee Htu people's calls for Burma Army troop withdrawal

On August 2, 2020, the Burma Army announced that the two soldiers who robbed and killed Karen villager Naw Mu Naw, mother of three, in Mutraw on July 16, had been tried by court martial and given the “maximum punishment.” No further details about the sentence have been released to the public.

KPSN strongly condemns the lack of transparency in this case, in contempt of the rights of Naw Mu Naw's family and community to know whether justice has been served for this brutal crime. There are strong doubts whether the trial was fairly conducted, given the military's earlier claims that the soldiers killed Mu Naw “accidentally”

In fact, this case should not have been tried by court martial, but in a civilian court, as it was a crime against a civilian, committed by soldiers who were off duty. Yet the Burma Army insisted on adjudicating the case themselves, clearly in an attempt to keep the facts from the public, and hush the incident up, like their previous crimes against civilians in Mutraw and other districts in Karen State.

For this recent atrocity is only the latest in a series of Burma Army killings in Mutraw this year, all committed with impunity. In one case, when a KNU forest worker was shot and killed on March 5, the Burma Army even falsely claimed that the victim, who had been riding a motorcycle, had attacked them first, and they had acted in self defence.

The prevailing climate of impunity was clearly what emboldened the two soldiers to rob and kill Naw Mu Naw in broad daylight, and what prompted thousands of Karen villagers to march publicly on July 22 and 28 in Mutraw and August 6, 2020, in Kler Lwee Htu, calling for an end to Burma Army crimes, and for the withdrawal of their troops from Mutraw.

Communities in Mutraw know full well that while the Burma Army remains in their lands, tasked to subjugate the local population at all costs, they will never be safe. The Burma Army has not respected their ceasefire with the KNU, continuing aggressive expansion into Mutraw, carrying out heavy shelling of civilian areas, and building over a dozen new military bases in recent years.

We support the Mutraw and Kler Lwee Htu people's calls for justice for Naw Mu Naw, and demand that this case be transferred to a civilian court. We also support their calls for Burma Army troop withdrawal and closure of bases – not only in Mutraw, but in conflict areas throughout the country, so that inclusive dialogue towards a new federal constitution can begin.

We urge the international community to support our calls for justice and peace by exerting increased diplomatic and economic pressure on Burma, including through sanctions targeting the Burma Army and their economic interests.

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