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February 10, 1997.

H.E. Kofi Annan  
Secretary-General of United Nations  
United Nations Secretariat  
New York, N.Y. 10017, USA

Dear Secretary-General:

Re: Nation-wide ceasefire, International arms embargo and Safety Zones in Burma

I am a Burmese national currently residing in Adelaide Australia and I firstly like to congratulate the Secretary-General and United Nations Organization for your efforts that has been made to reach recent peace agreement in Guatemala. Such peace accord in Guatemala that implemented under the auspices of United Nations and International Community has been a great inspiration to the people of Burma.

With this note, I Firstly call the Secretary-General's attention to the continuing political and military conflicts in Burma. There have been repeated occurrences of attacks on Karen refugee camps by the SLORC-backed Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) on 28-29 January 1997. This attack has left 10,000 Karen refugee homeless. There are also reports of border conflicts between the DKBA/SLORC and Thai military. I therefore call upon you and UNHCR to make a greater effort to protect these refugees in Thailand.

I also call your attention to the communication made to the former Secretary-General, Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali, on 26 February 1996. I should like to repeat the request you to make measures through the U.N. Security Council regarding with (1) implementing a nationwide ceasefire; (2) creating Safety Zones and (3) imposing international arms embargo in Burma. The Burma's refugees problem has been a long-standing and the largest of its kind in Southeast Asia. I therefore appeal you to make an immediate measure to solve this problem.

I call the Secretary-General's attention, particularly, to the incidents of the large-scale arbitrary arrest and detention of elected members of parliament in Burma. During the week of May 19, 1996, approximately 260 of elected members of National League for Democracy were detained by military authorities in order to prevent those M.P.s attending the convention to be held on May 26-29. Again in September 1996, a total of 560 NLD activists and supporters were arrested prior to the All-Burma Congress to be held on that month. I believe such a large-scale arrests and detentions can be prevented by deploying the human rights monitors in Burma. I therefore call upon you and the U.N. Special Rapporteur to recommend, at this February-1997 Session of Commission on Human Rights meeting, the United Nations Security Council to send human rights monitors to Burma.

I also call your attention to the Statement from the recently held Ethnic Nationalities Seminar, of which I enclosed with this letter. The 15-ethnic nationality groups - including those groups that have already signed the military-ceasefire agreement with the Burmese Army over the years - are now calling for a tri-partite dialogue in Burma (One group, the Karen National Union, still has not enter military-ceasefire with Burmese Army primarily because of the SLORC is refusing to initiate the tri-partite dialogue.) I believe that the United Nations is in a good position to supervise and monitor the ceasefires in Burma - as the U.N. has recently made initiatives in Guatemala. I therefore ask the Secretary-General and U.N. Security Council authorize the deployment of U.N. civilian peace-keepers - of which at some stage may include the U.N. military personnels - in order to supervise the ceasefires in Burma.

In closing, I thank you for your kind attention to Burma matters. The continuing efforts made by United Nations to peace in Burma are most appreciated by the Burmese people.

Yours respectfully and sincerely,

Ms: 10/2/97

(U Ne Oo)

copy to:

1. H.E. Madeleine K. Albright, U.S. Secretary of State, United States Department of State, Washington D.C. 20520, U.S.A.
2. Ms Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Case Postale 2500, CH-1211 Geneva 2 Depot, Switzerland.
3. Mr Alvaro de Soto, U.N. Assistant-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, U.N. Department of Political Affairs, United Nations New York NY 10017, U.S.A.
4. Mr Jan Eliasson, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, U.N. Department of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations New York NY 10017, U.S.A.



While the Karen National Union army marches, Rangoon puts pressure on its supporters.

BURMA

# Burning Ultimatum

Cross-border attacks timed to force Karen rebel hand

By Bertil Lintner in Mae Sot, Thailand

At first glance, the timing couldn't have been worse. Burma is due to join Asean this year, breaking decades of isolation. And, more immediately, the Thai army commander-in-chief Gen. Chettha Thanajaro will visit Rangoon soon to discuss problems along the common border. But then, beginning on January 28, troops from Burma crossed into Thailand, looting and setting ablaze three refugee camps near Mae Sot, around 400 kilometres northeast of Bangkok.

More than 1,000 buildings were burned, leaving 10,000 homeless in two initial attacks: one at Huay Kalok, 10 kilometres north of Mae Sot, and the other at Don Pa Kiang near Huay Bong, 19 kilometres north of Mae Sot. All of the refugees were ethnic Karens who had fled the civil war in Burma.

On February 2, forces from across the border then attacked Mae La farther to the north, home for 25,000 refugees, and the largest of the camps along the Thai-Burmese frontier.

In the south near Mae Sot, the attackers came mainly from the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, a renegade faction operating under Burmese army command. In the north, independent sources along the border say, regular Burmese troops from the 259 Light Infantry Regiment carried out the raids, guided through the terrain by a few local DKBA troops.

But what can Burma gain from attacking refugee camps in a country which has helped it break its international isolation, and even defended it from critics of its abysmal human-rights record?

Diplomatic observers in Bangkok see three reasons for the attacks. The first, and most important, is to pressure the Karens into accepting a cease-fire with the government, as have 15 other rebel forces in Burma. The rebel Karen National Union, to which most of the refugees in the camps pay allegiance, has talked to the government four times so far, most recently last November in Moulmein.

"But negotiations have gone nowhere," says a KNU spokesman in Mae Sot. "They only wanted to discuss the terms of the cease-fire without addressing any political issues." Many in Mae Sot believe the Burmese gave the KNU an ultimatum: Agree to a cease-fire before the end of January, or face military action. The timing of the attacks certainly backs this theory.

Second, local security officials in Mae Sot suspect that by instigating violence along the border, the Burmese government hopes the Thais will tire of housing the refugees and repatriate them to Burma. "By letting the DKBA carry out some of the attacks, the Burmese want it to appear as if it were some kind of infighting among us Karens," says Robert Htwe, a Karen aid worker on the border.

A third reason could be a meeting of about a dozen ethnic minority groups in

the area opposite Umphang south of Mae Sot in mid-January, which seems to have angered the government in Rangoon. The resolution from the meeting rejected the government's efforts to draw up a new constitution, which the minority groups say will "perpetuate the military dictatorship." It also called for a dialogue between the ruling junta, pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the ethnic minorities, and urged Asean not to admit Burma.

The meeting was especially remarkable because it brought together not only the KNU and a few other rebel armies still fighting the government, but also four groups which have made cease-fire agreements with the government: the Was, the Mons, the Kachins and the Karennis.

"This was unprecedented," says Tzang Yawng hwe, a Shan now living in Canada whose father served as Burma's first president. "The unity was remarkable." Not since the 1980s have so many ethnic minority groups discussed common issues.

The Burmese junta's decision to strike against the camps may not, after all, have been that untimely. "They want to crush all resistance along the border, and they clearly see the refugee camps as havens for KNU cadres and their dependents," says an Asian diplomat in Bangkok. He suggests that the Thai government's reluctance to protect the camps also indicates a desire to be relieved of the nearly 100,000 refugees in camps in Thailand.

But neither military action nor Burma's cease-fires seems likely to guarantee peace for civilians. In Shan State, where nearly all rebel groups have made cease-fire accords with Rangoon, over 100,000 people from 600 villages have been relocated, often at gunpoint, according to a recent report from the Shan Human Rights Foundation in Chiang Mai. They have been forced into 45 main sites, where the authorities believe that they can more easily control traditionally defiant civilians.

Many Shan have fled into Thailand, where officials estimate as many as 300,000-400,000 people from Burma work illegally. "We just couldn't stay at home," says Ai Tuan, a 23-year-old man from southern Shan State who is a construction worker in Thailand. "The army came to our village almost every day to demand crops and forced labour."

A continuous flood of refugees into Thailand is only one outcome of the still-unsettled political situation in Burma. Bloody cross-border raids, with ensuing instability in a previously tranquil frontier area, is another. Asean's silence over the situation in Burma seems bound to backfire, benefiting—as it seems to—only the junta in Rangoon. ■

### **Karen on the run as Rangoon ups offensive**

*February 14, 1997 The Nation*

*Yindee Lertcharoenchok*

KEEPING its pledge to crush Karen rebels, the Burmese Army yesterday pressed on with its full scale offensive forcing the guerrillas to gradually abandon their strongholds and driving another 15,000 Karen refugees into northern Thailand.

The Burmese operation against the Karen National Union's (KNU) 6th Brigade, which began on Tuesday the very same day the Burmese junta informed Thailand of its decision to use force against the rebel group is the largest since a successful offensive in Jan 1996 which captured the former KNU headquarters at Manerplaw.

Already close to 20,000 Karen civilians have fled over the past three days into Tak province's Umphang district, which houses about 8,000 refugees of earlier Burmese attacks and harassment.

Karen and Thai officials have estimated that about 4,500 Burmese troops from the 33rd, 44th, 65th, 66th, 77th, 88th and 101st divisions, fully equipped with powerful weapons, are being mobilised for assaults from the North and West.

On Tuesday, Burmese forces from another two divisions left Mergui and Tavoy in southern Burma by boat, disembarked opposite Thailand's Kanchanaburi province and are now marching northwards to launch an attack from the South.

According to the officials, Burmese troops had swept through several civilian villages in their attack from the West against the Sakanthit outpost, forcing villagers to flee to Thailand for safety. KNU forces active in the area gradually withdrew and the Burmese forces took full control of the stronghold, which also operates as a market place, around noon yesterday.

At about 1 pm yesterday, the Burmese troops began attacking from the North, using heavy mortar and artillery fire to shell Tee Kla Pler, the supposed KNU headquarters opposite the Thai village of Nong Luang, and Baan Mai Ta Waw Saw in Burma, opposite Baan Noh Pah Taw Wah.

While Thai officials said two of the mortars fell close to Noh Pah Taw Wah refugee camp, Karen refugee officials said about 10 fell in the vicinity of the camp.

Karen and Thai officials said KNU troops, who have turned to mobile guerrilla tactics since the loss of Manerplaw, did not try to defend the two camps and gradually retreated after burning them down. Assaults by ground troops were sporadic as KNU forces tried to avoid direct confrontation.

In Bangkok, Thai Army chief Gen Chettha Thanajaro said the situation on the Thai side, as a result of the fighting in Burma, was not as tense as reported.

He said Thailand will only allow fleeing women, children and elderly people into the country and will use force to expel any foreign armed troops.

The Burmese junta told Thai authorities on Tuesday that it decided to use force against the KNU because the armed ethnic group had rejected its peace overtures. (TN)

### **Further influx of refugees as Slorc continues offensive in Karen territory**

*17.2.97/Thailand Times*

TAK ; Burmese troops yesterday pushed unrelentingly into Karen National Union (KNU) territory, forcing a new wave of refugees across the border, a KNU officer said yesterday.

Several Karen villages have come under heavy attack from the Burmese forces while Karens have been desperately trying to make it to comparative safety in Thailand. KNU troops fled in disarray as the villages were bombarded, and are now hiding out in the Burmese jungles, said Maj Macher, a KNU officer who supervises refugees in Thailand.

He called on Thailand to be prepared for thousands more refugees to follow, saying the Burmese troops have launched major offensives against every one of the KNU's Division 4 bases, located in the Burma region opposite the Thai province of Kanchanaburi.

A steady stream of refugees have already made the perilous journey across the border into Tak province's Umphang district, where they are now seeking shelter. The officer said some of them have been accepted by Thibahong refugee camp.

Reports indicate that part of the 'KNU's Division 6 have abandoned their bases and opened fire on the advancing Burmese from hilltop positions, he said. By planting land mines around the base of the hills, the KNU are so far holding off the Burmese forces.

The KNU suffered a major defeat last week when their Teekaper stronghold fell at the hands of the Burmese junta, causing refugees to flood into Thailand.

After inspecting refugee camps in Umphang district yesterday, Tak Governor Pongpayom Wasaputi said the residents of the district's four existing camps will next week be relocated to Mae Chan district's Ban Nupho camp, 13 kilometers into Thai territory.