



**OFFICE OF THE SUPREME HEADQUARTERS  
KAREN NATIONAL UNION  
KAWTHOOLEI**

**New Year Address by KNU President Saw Tamlabaw**

All the Karen People at Home and Abroad,  
Leaders & Comrades,

Day one of the waxing moon of Thalay month, the year 2749, which falls on December 16, 2009, is the New Year Day of the Karen people. It is a delight for us again to be celebrating a new auspicious year and I wish each and every Karen living in various places a Happy New Year and to have a good health of both the body and mind!

First, I would like to say that our Karen people are not a small minority. The Karen were the first people to enter in this land now known as Burma in 739 B.C. and lived, peacefully and in freedom, as a people for over a thousand year. However, since the feudal days, the Karen people have not known much peace and freedom because of violent attacks and suppression by the despotic Mon and Burman kings and now by the chauvinist Burman militarists.

Being a nationality in this country, it is necessary for the Karen people to have the rights befitting a nationality such as the rights of national self-determination for self development. In this respect, I would like to remind you that it is vital for us to maintain and protect our language, literature and culture. In the eastern Karen area, the existence of the Karen resistance and the KNU has made it still possible for the Karen people to speak their language and study their literature. The majority of the Karen in the towns and cities and the Irrawaddy Delta can hardly speak, read and write their language as they have, to a great extent, lost the rights to maintain their culture. All of us must seriously note about this matter. At the same time, we must recognize the role of the Karen patriots and community leaders, in towns and cities and in the Delta, who have been working to prevent disappearance of the Karen as a people, due to loss of their language and literature. As a result of the work of these persons, the Karen language and literature are surviving to a certain extent in those places.

While struggling for the their national rights, quite a number of the Karen people have migrated to places all over the world and it is necessary for them to make maximum effort to maintain the Karen language, literature and culture, so as to prevent disappearance of the Karen people from this planet earth.

Secondly, I would like to say that in the review of our history, we see that successive rulers have practiced repression and atrocities against the Karen people causing a lot of bitterness in us. We still are denied our birth rights up to this day. The Karen problem is a political problem and successive Karen leaders have tried to resolve the problem by political means. However, we have to continue the revolutionary resistance up to this day, as the successive military cliques in power have refused to accept resolution of conflict peacefully and continued to wipe us out by force of arms.

Accordingly, in our struggle to liberate ourselves from repression and enslavement, we must be politically alert, unite without discrimination as to religious creed and ideology, and be especially alert so as not to be tricked by the enemy and traitors.

Thirdly, I would like to say that, in addition to repression and enslavement of the Karen people, the military regime in power has been systematically sowing dissension among the Karen people, make the Karen youths to become narcotic drug addicts and create misunderstanding using religious differences. Successive military regimes have been systematically practicing the policy of genocide against the Karen people by using increasing repression, torture and extra-judicial killing and, at the same time, launching military offensives against the Karen in the eastern part of the country, destroying the livelihood of the people and planting landmines around farms and villages with the intention of maiming and killing the civilian population.

Fourthly, I would like to say that the year 2010 is a very perilous year, because the military regime, with the intention of obliterating the birth rights of self-determination of the ethnic nationalities, is carrying out programs in accordance with the state constitution it has fraudulently drafted and adopted by force.

The KNU is opposing the SPDC adopted constitution and the election, which will bring no guarantee and rights to the ethnic nationalities. Every move of the KNU has political meaning and is aimed to liberate the Karen people from oppression and give the Karen people the right to exist as a nationality with dignity, or to establish a federal union with full democracy and in which the Karen people has the right to decide their own destiny.

The political struggle has direct relation to the fate of the Karen people and it is the responsibility of every Karen to bear. For that reason, on this auspicious occasion, it is my earnest wish and exhortation to each and every Karen, living in various places, to stand firmly under the leadership of the KNU and take up any responsibility available in the struggle for liberation of the Karen people, with new vigor and unity, in cooperation with fellow ethnic nationality forces and democratic forces, until victory is achieved.

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