

Statement from indigenous Karen customary land *Kaw* seminar

June 28, 2018

The first Karen customary land *Kaw* seminar was organized by the Karen National Union (KNU) Central Land Committee in Ta May Hta Village, Pay Kay Village Tract, Luthaw Township, Mutraw District (Hpapun), Kawthoolei from June 25-27, 2018. The seminar was joined by 241 indigenous Karen customary community leaders, civil society leaders, and KNU department staff representing all seven KNU districts.

During this seminar, we discussed the Karen indigenous land management system, *Kaw*, which has been practiced since our ancestors' time and practiced in different places in Kawthoolei. The *Kaw* management system and history, and the necessary steps and challenges to revitalize *Kaw* management were also discussed.

The *Kaw* is a Karen customary land management system that is based on environmental protection, biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, and also includes sustainable land use. However this Karen traditional culture is in danger of disappearing because of many things. Throughout Kawthoolei, *Kaw* have been threatened by decades of Burma military offensives that have forced us to flee from our ancestral territories. *Kaw* are also under threat by land grabbing for economic development such as agribusiness plantations, mining, large hydropower dams, and other large scale infrastructure development as well as top-down conservation plans and Burma military expansion. So we organized this meeting in order to revitalize the *Kaw* system, and so we call for the following six actions:

1. Recognize indigenous Karen customary territories now!
2. The Burma Army must withdraw from our ancestral domain.
3. The Burma government must recognize ethnic customary land rights including our Karen *Kaw*.
4. The Burma government and international community must respect the KNU land policy that includes measures for *Kaw* customary land rights.
5. No more land grabbing, large scale projects, and top-down conservation without Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) on indigenous Karen territories.
6. The Burma government and international community must respect our Karen indigenous peoples' right to maintain our traditional culture.

Karen Indigenous People, Kawthoolei

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