

*Promoting human rights by protecting those who defend them*

## **LRWC Supports Refugees from Myanmar on World Refugee Day 20 June 2021**

### **IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**15 June 2021** - There is little world-wide attention paid to the lives of thousands of refugees who for years have lived in refugee camps along the Thai/Myanmar border, with close to 100,000 people living there today. These refugees have fled to Thailand from the ethnic states in Myanmar and have suffered a long history of conflict.

To commemorate World Refugee Day 2021, Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada (LRWC) is helping to organize a panel discussion and fundraiser for humanitarian aid on 17 June 2021, "Preventing Pushbacks of Refugees Fleeing Myanmar Along the Thai/Myanmar Border," 5-6:30 p.m. PDT, hosted by the Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiatives (CAPI) and the University of Victoria.

Co-moderator of the discussion, law student and human rights activist Moora Paw, reflects on her own life as a refugee growing up in a refugee camp on the Thai/ Myanmar border. "I want people to be aware of what it feels like to be a refugee, not knowing what the future holds, where your next meal is coming from, and always feeling like you don't have a voice, like you don't matter as a person." She explains why this event is important, "This discussion not only empowers me and allows me to raise awareness of what happened and is continuing to happen in Burma, but it allows me to be an example to other refugee youth both in Western countries and in the refugee camps, and to show them that it is important to do our part."

Since the 1 February 2021 military coup in Myanmar, which ended a decade of civilian rule, there have been daily protests against the Myanmar military junta across the country. The junta have responded with extreme violence, and are targeting many of the ethnic states bordering Thailand with airstrikes, and other violence. Human rights defenders, including civil society organizations and academics in Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore and Canada, are working to draw awareness of the imminent danger and extreme human rights abuses facing Karen, Karenni and other ethnic populations within Myanmar. A number of these human rights defenders will be speaking at the panel discussion hosted by CAPI.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tom Andrews, on [8 June 2021](#) called for immediate action. "Let me be blunt," Andrews has said, "Mass deaths from starvation, disease, and exposure, on a scale we have not yet seen since the February 1 coup, could occur in Kayah [Karenni] State absent immediate action" by the world community to protect civilians, ensure humanitarian access, and to "cut off access to the resources that the junta needs to continue these brutal attacks..."

Tens of thousands of people, mostly women and children, are hiding in the jungle fleeing airstrikes and fighting. Reports continue daily about the Myanmar military junta burning vehicles, setting up military blockades, and killing volunteers and human rights defenders who are attempting to distribute humanitarian aid, medicine, and supplies.

Spokesperson for the Karenni State Consultative Council, Aung Sun Myint Steven, advises: “Clashes have forced mostly older women and children to flee. The situation is particularly concerning for the elderly women and children who do not have sufficient shelters as the rainy season will bring health problems such as cold, malaria and diarrhea. As the displaced persons are spread out in various locations, it is challenging to deliver healthcare to them ...delivering humanitarian aids in a timely manner has faced major obstacles because areas where supplies are needed, such as medicine and food, have been put under martial law and are being targeted by the Myanmar military.”

Donations are being collected that will go towards food, water and humanitarian supplies for the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people in Myanmar, mostly women and children who are hiding in the jungle. Donations can be made to the Karen Women’s Organization at: <https://t.co/TtuNTrWNbp?amp=1>.

Register for the online discussion: [https://events.uvic.ca/capi/view/event/event\\_id/57890](https://events.uvic.ca/capi/view/event/event_id/57890)

- Main event listing: [https://events.uvic.ca/capi/view/event/date/20210617/event\\_id/57890](https://events.uvic.ca/capi/view/event/date/20210617/event_id/57890)
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/uviccapi/posts/3767444590027080>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/CAPIUVic/status/1399190750013788160>

#### **Media contacts:**

Moora Paw (organizer and co-moderator, UVic JD/JID law student)  
Cell: (250) 686-7220

Renée Mulligan (organizer, Director of LRWC and CAPI Associate)  
Cell: (250) 813-3318  
Web: [www.lrwc.org](http://www.lrwc.org)

#### **Photo credit:**

Karen Human Rights Group

*LRWC is a committee of lawyers and other human rights defenders who promote international human rights law, the rule of law, the integrity of legal systems and advocacy rights globally, through advocacy, education and legal research. LRWC has Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council. See more information on LRWC’s advocacy on Myanmar at <https://www.lrwc.org/category/publications/campaigns/countries/myanmar/>.*